Marxism Today

April 1986 85p

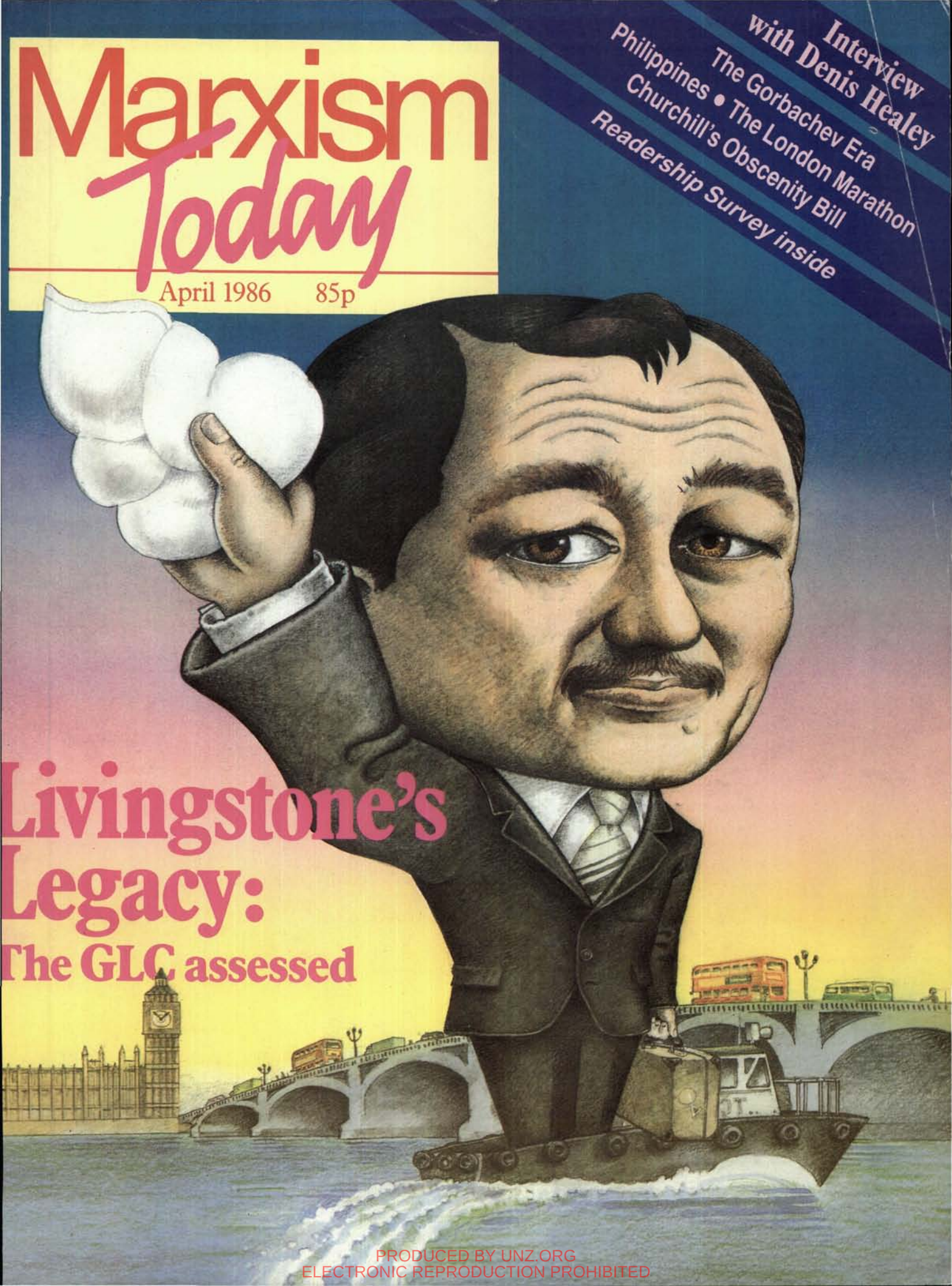
Interview with Denis Healey

The Gorbachev Era

Philippines • The London Marathon

Churchill's Obscenity Bill

Readership Survey inside



Livingstone's Legacy:

The GLC assessed

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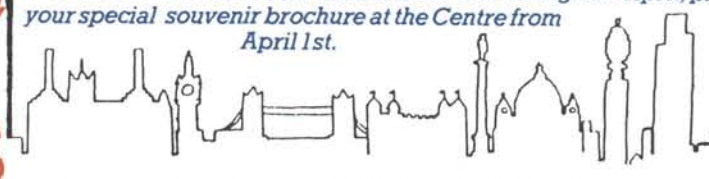

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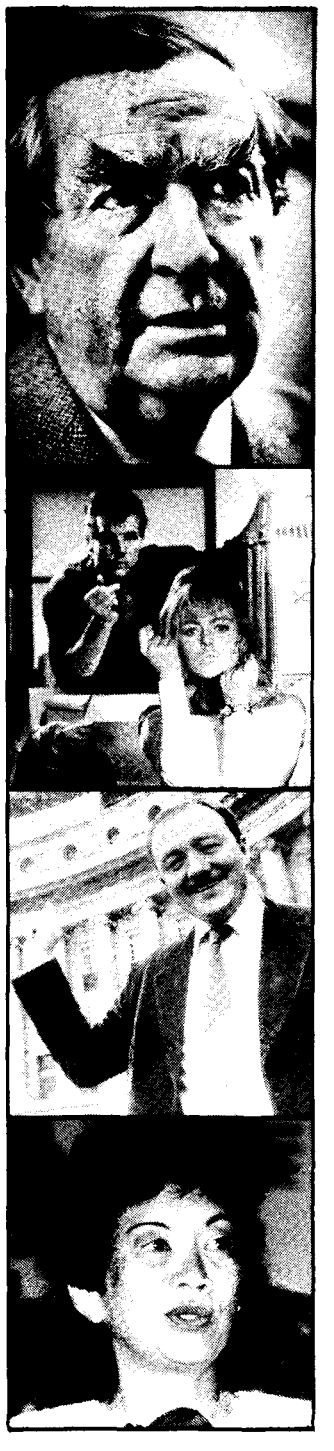

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FOCUS

NUCLEAR TROUBLES

Nuclear power in the UK is in visible decline. To a considerable degree it has achieved this position by its own efforts. The decline began over 10 years ago, when it was manifestly unable to come to terms with the collapse of the programme of Advanced Gas Cooled Reactors (AGRs) begun in 1965.

This was the second phase of nuclear construction, and was to be followed by the fast breeder reactor programme, based at Dounreay in Scotland of which some 20 stations should by now have been under construction. That programme too has been a disaster. Operationally the nuclear industry is made up of an ageing and failing first programme of Magnox reactors, feeding into an ailing and ageing reprocessing plant at Sellafield – now the subject of a withering report by the select committee on the environment.

But these troubles on their own would not necessarily spell the industry's demise. What it is now having to contend with however is public hostility. 'The first, overriding, all-pervading impression which presented itself to us at every stage of the inquiry' according to Sir Hugh Rossi, chair of the select committee inquiry into radioactive waste, 'was the enormous and seemingly unbridgeable gap which exists between the perception of the problem by the professionals (ie, the nuclear industy) and the anxieties expressed by representatives of the general public.' Strong words from a Tory chair of a Tory-controlled committee about an industry, criticism of which was off limits for the first 25 years of its development.

In the wake of that report, the chances of the waste disposal body winning approval to bury low level waste, in shallow trenches covered by soil, at one of the four sites now under discussion must be doubtful. The select committee castigates the industry for its complacency: Sellafield, it says, is the most polluting plant to be found anywhere and the Irish Sea the most polluted sea. The report very largely vindicates the National Union of Seamen whose forthright action has stopped the dumping of intermediate level waste at sea.

In total the select committee's report is a blow not simply against those directly responsible for waste mismanagement, but against the future of nuclear power. The CEGB and the construction companies are now awaiting the report of Sir Frank Layfield on the two-year Sizewell Inquiry with a considerable amount of apprehension. If, as is possible, their fears turn out to be justified, in the present climate there will be almost no possiblity of even Mrs Thatcher pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the nuclear industry. Which will leave Lord Marshall and the PWR lobby feeling the chill of isolation.

The nuclear lobby as a whole will take shelter in supporting the construction of yet more of the disastrous AGRs largely on the grounds that they are British built. In that they will hope to have support of the Labour party leadership. But they may be disappointed. In any event, as the industry ducks and weaves to stay afloat, the prospects of the £20 billion PWR programme announced in 1979 are shattered for good.

Perhaps the most important recommendation in the environment's committee's report is that which casts serious doubt on the construction of the new reprocessing plant at Sellafield. Although £350m has been spent they suggest that it might be better to write this off rather than to go ahead and spend £1400m to complete the plant. This is

ON SECOND THOUGHTS, I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT TO BE PART OF THE MAINLAND AFTER ALL!
ULSTER UNIONIST'S HQ
IRISH TIMES
MORE SELLAFIELD LEAKS

a courageous recommendation by the committee and if acted upon, it spells serious trouble for the proposal to build a new reprocessing plant at Dounreay when it goes to public inquiry in April.

Public hostility to nuclear power is of course not the same thing as political opposition. Because nuclear power has been a politically protected area, the political parties and the trade unions have been sucked into a consensus of support. That is now beginning to break up, as it becomes obvious on the most pragmatic level, that there are no votes in nuclear power. It has been reported that Dr John Cunningham was given assurances that the resolution of the 1985 Labour party conference to close down the nuclear industry will not find its way into the manifesto. That may be so, but it is an open question, and what is now almost certain not to go in the manifesto, is the commitment to support nuclear power.

The hard core of support for nuclear power remains within the TUC's fuel and power industries committee, still controlled by the electricians, the electrical power workers, the professional civil servants, with support from the engineers. The issue of jobs will not make it easy to break that hold on this area of policy. The Scottish Labour party conference recently defeated the AUEW-led defence of nuclear power, but they are under pressure to exempt Dounreay. Dounreay is a reactor that does not work, it carries a greater potential for serious accident, and it is so expensive that even if it did not work, it would not produce electricity at competitive prices.

Moreover like the other nuclear plants in Scotland, it can only work at the expense of the coal industry. Why not then spend another £2 billion over the next 10 years on developing the Scottish economy, rather than put coal miners out of work?

Colin Sweet

NEW WINE, OLD BOTTLES . . .

'I'm sure no-one ever thought it would happen' said President Corazon Aquino. She certainly wasn't wrong so far as the Left was concerned. The massive popular sentiment in favour of change had been obvious enough, but so too had Marcos's determination if necessary to steal victory in the February 7 elections by terrorism and fraud. Where forecasts foundered was on the assumption that the ailing autocrat would get away with the felony.

Neither of the principal forces on the divided Left, more significantly, played any direct part in the Aquino triumph. The original Partido Komunistang Pilipinas (PKP) described the snap election as a diversionary contest between 'prospective caretakers of American interest' and urged voters to mark their ballot papers with slogans of anti-imperialist protest.

The larger, more widely-publicised Communist party of the Philippines (CPP) decided after heated internal debates to adopt a similar stance, calling for a complete boycott of a poll it saw as a meaningless 'circus of reactionaries'.

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FOCUS

photo: Paul Raffaele/Camera Press

Taking power: Cory Aquino, the new president of the Philippines, with Salvador Laurel, prime minister-designate.

The CPP's initial divisions and subsequent note of ambivalence on the boycott policy mirrored the party's peculiar evolution. Founded in December 1968 as a breakaway from the PKP, the party was dominated initially by university activists inspired by the cultural revolution in China. When the New People's Army (NPA) was launched as the party's military wing, it proudly dedicated itself to waging a guerrilla struggle under the 'supreme command' of Mao Zedong's thought. But as many early cadres were captured or became passive, as the movement burgeoned and as the great helmsman's star waned, positions of leadership in the party, the NPA and above all in the associated mass organisations were frequently taken by radical Catholics inspired by liberation theology.

The seed of truth behind this partisan caricature helps explain the disagreement over the boycott line, for numerous Catholic activists within the CPP-aligned Left felt strongly attracted to the Aquino campaign. In both style and content the campaign indeed resembled nothing so much as an evangelical crusade, the atmosphere at rallies alternating between near-hysteria and reverent, emotion-filled silence.

From the platform Aquino spoke not about political specifics but about her commitment to democracy, justice, morality and faith. She extolled good and condemned evil. Above all, she spoke about 'Ninoy', her assassinated husband. Benigno Aquino had been a politician very much in the traditional elitist and pro-American mould. He admitted publicly that he had worked with the CIA during the terms of three successive Philippine presidents. But with his death he became a martyr, and that potent image was inherited by his widow.

Among a people attuned to religious idiom from the cradle, these appeals struck a responsive chord, and public support for a boycott was manifestly scant. Immediately after the poll, as Marcos loyalists doctored the count, the Left's forecasts nevertheless seemed to be vindicated. A CPP representative confidently predicted at this juncture that the moderate opposition would inevitably contract and the revolutionary movement would advance apace.

Then this whole scenario was abruptly shattered. Onto the swelling Aquino bandwagon there finally jumped two Johnny-come-latelies – the Philippine military and the United States – whose weight very quickly made the critical difference.

This created a fresh dilemma for the CPP-aligned forces. All through the party's 17-year life its propaganda had been primarily directed against what it termed the 'US-Marcos dictatorship'. However popular in the short-term, such an identification of the liberation struggle with the removal of a single individual inevitably creates severe problems if that individual disappears from the scene before victory is won.

The Left's initial reactions to the new government and its peace overtures have revealed division and confusion even deeper than before the election. The released political prisoners have understandably been particularly hesitant to criticise their liberator. Aquino, stated the CPP founding chairperson, was a good woman who was on the right track and deserved broad support. A former NPA second-in-command looked forward to dialogue with the government and to a peaceful settlement. But such views are not just held by grateful ex-detainees. One of the largest mass organisations, for example, issued a statement celebrating Marcos's ouster as 'a significant victory in the Filipino people's struggle for genuine democracy and national independence.' At the opposite extreme, however, the very same organisation's secretary general advanced the new wine in an old bottle argument: 'Marcos isn't here, but the Marcos dictatorship is still in place.'

Plainly the coalition of the military, the church, elite politicians and millionaire businessmen that backs Aquino constitutes one of the unlikeliest 'revolutionary governments' ever seen. Whether it has the ability or even the will to justify the almost millenial expectations it has aroused must be doubtful in the extreme. When the firework displays and yellow cavalcades are through, the Left will need to regroup, unite and assess more dispassionately what has or has not changed.

Jim Richardson

● GETTING TOUGH ON RAPE?

The just-released 1985 crime figures, showing a dramatic increase in reported rape, combined with the massive publicity over the Ealing vicarage rape and the multiple-rapist, Patrick Reilly, sent to prison for life, are pushing the government and the judiciary into even tougher measures against rape.

The government will almost certainly announce changes extending greater anonymity to raped women, although there is likely to be some resistance to the proposal that anonymity for men accused of rape be removed altogether. These moves to restrict the rights of rapists (alleged or convicted) follow other recent changes: the increase in the penalty for attempted rape from seven years to life, and directions issued by Lord Lane, Lord Chief Justice, to judges last February on tougher rape sentencing.

Lord Lane was responding to direct pressure from the government. David Mellor, junior minister at the Home Office, had pointedly sent him a transcript of a House of Commons debate last November in which he himself called for the introduction of 'banded' sentences for rape, along similar lines to those recently introduced for drug offences.

Three months later, Lord Lane issued his new directions which, while not binding, are influential on individual judges. He directed that, in general, rape should carry a minimum five year sentence and that there be other minimums for specific variations of the

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MP attacks judge's remarks in rape case

RAPISTS MUST BE JAILED, JUDGES TOLD

By JAMES O'DRISCOLL High Court Reporter

"RAPE MEANS JAIL," ruled Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, in the High Court ... he refused to reduce ... convicted rapists.

As police begin a new deal for victims of sex attacks, Barbara Toner examines a top detective's guidelines for rape cases

Judge in sex row removed

Mother of raped girl held after knife find in court

By Paul Johnson

crime: for example, eight years where two or more rapists were working together or where the rape involved abduction; 15 years for men conducting 'campaigns of rape'; and life for 'perverted or psychopathic' offenders who were an indefinite danger to women.

Taking these proposals with the recent increase from seven years to life for attempted rape, and the just-announced white paper proposal that anonymity for rape defendants be removed, it looks on the surface like an effective assault on crimes against women.

But is it? This is not the first time that Lord Lane has got tough on rape. He did so in 1982, after public anxiety at lenient rape sentencing, and in particular the decision of Judge Bertram Richards to fine a convicted rapist on the basis that his victim was guilty of 'a great deal of contributory negligence' to the crime. However, sentencing patterns have not changed significantly in the last few years: despite some increase in those given five year or more sentences, the average sentence for rape is still between two to five years. This compares to 10 to 15 years for those convicted of armed robbery from banks, building societies and security vans in which firearms are carried, but not necessarily used.

And whatever sentencing patterns, the reported incidence of rape continues to increase. In the last decade, the figure has increased by 50%, with a particularly sharp rise in the early 1980s. This upward trend was most marked in 1985 with a 29% national increase and a 50% increase in London. It could mean more women are reporting the crime: the Metropolitan police, in particular, has made some highly publicised changes in rape procedure.

The question of the relativity of penalties lies at the heart of the sentencing dilemma for feminists and the Left in general. In so far as sentencing has a symbolic or denunciatory function (determining the gravity of certain crimes in society's eyes) calls for heavier rape sentences are understandable. Rape should stand second only to murder. But, in practice, does this mean that feminists or the Left should, for this one offence alone, be actively advocating long periods of imprisonment, in a prison system that in any other context most would campaign against as barbaric and violent?

Moreover, it is clear that in practice, sentencing is not neutral. Like police procedure, it is determined as much by the state's perception of the defendant as it is by its view of the crime committed. Thus, in one recently reported case, a dozen paratroopers had their sentences cut for raping and indecently assaulting a woman soldier. According to the appeal judge these were 'fine men and good soldiers' who had 'thrown away their careers'.

And is it mere co-incidence that in the most recent round of public 'outrage' about rape, one of the most publicised cases, on which the House of Commons debate and thus Lord Lane's tough initiative was hinged, was the conviction of five black rapists? Clearly, in both the courts and in police procedure the fact of the accused's race, class, status, professional standing and so on weigh heavily.

Judicial attitudes towards women are also a crucial question. Lord Lane would have done as well to condemn judges who continue to make remarks on the complicity and culpability of the woman in rape cases, and who, under the 1976 Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, give leave too easily for a woman's past sexual history to be brought up in court and used against her.

Dilemmas over sentencing make it particularly disturbing that some, like Gwyneth Dunwoody, have called for heavier sentences as a kind of substitute protection for women in the face of government failure to protect women by other means. What is needed is massive capital injection into the improvement of women's safety on the streets, on public transport and housing estates, and into seriously tackling the attitudes that condone rape – including those found in the judiciary.

Melissa Benn

A LEADERSHIP IN MEMORIAM

Olof Palme was one of the three great postwar Social Democratic leaders and statesmen, along with Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky, who were both personal friends and intimate political associates of Palme. About a decade younger than the others, Palme was in his lifetime never allowed their avuncular respect, nor did he have time to acquire their semi-retired detachment from day-to-day domestic political controversy. He was assassinated while still vibrant with energy.

Palme was a strong and complex personality and politician, who deserves an adult obituary, not a sentimental hagiography. What was his greatness, what were his limitations, and what accounts for them both?

Clearly, his place in history is primarily that of an international statesman in the vanguard of the defence of democratic rights, national self-determination, disarmament, and global economic justice. With his speech to the Christian brotherhood movement within Swedish social democracy on July 30 1965 he was the first leading Western politician to take a principled stand for Vietnamese self-determination and against US intervention.

But the basis for his interventions on the world scene should not be forgotten. Olof Palme was for 16 years the leader of the strongest, most united, and ideologically most imaginative and innovative Social Democratic party of the world. For 10 years he was prime minister of a country which weathered the storms of the international crisis better than most.

However, this does not mean that Palme played the same role in domestic as in international politics. He was in this particular context neither a major statesman nor ideological architect. In fact, none of the three major reform campaigns of Swedish Social Democracy in the past 20 years – the broad Increased Equality campaign of the late 60s, the progressive labour legislation of the mid-70s and the wage-earners' funds – owed anything special to Palme's personal efforts. True, he did influence strongly the new party programme of 1975. Compared to the previous one of 1960, that programme certainly meant a radicalisation. Above all, it had a very strong and elaborate international orientation and flavour. But in his home base, Palme was mainly a party fighter and a tactician.

Till his very last years, Palme's relations with the Swedish Left were rather bad. In the

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course of trade union radicalisation in the 1970s, many of the trade union cadres came to dislike Palme intensely, both for his style and for his socio-economic moderation. On the whole, like many brilliant men and women Palme seems to have been little loved by his senior everyday entourage, too shining, too self-assured, too full of his own ideas. But he had nothing of the aloofness of Franklin Roosevelt, nor of the personal squalor of John Kennedy.

He was never a marxist, and he was an ideologically convinced anti-Communist. His party programme of 1975 typically included a substantial section devoted to 'capitalist and communist oligarchy'. He was one of the last among leading Social Democrats to accept the Swedish Eurocommunist party as a legitimate political force with which open negotiations and deals could be made. On the other hand, as a promoter of détente he had good relations with the Soviets, and he was an explicit friend of Cuba and Vietnam.

Four major forces contributed and converged into making Palme what he was. One was his class: aristocratic, small country but cosmopolitan, and humanistic. Secondly, Palme could speak to the Vietnam generation as no other Western politician could, because he was himself largely a product of the first postwar international student movement. He was for several years a prominent figure in the worldwide students organisation, after the break with the Communist International Union of Students, the chairperson of the Western-oriented coordinating secretariat. As such, Palme travelled widely in Asia and other parts of what later became known as the Third World, gaining similar experiences of colonialist exploitation and racism to those of later generations of young, open-minded travellers. In Palme there was to remain a strong component of an American student radical.

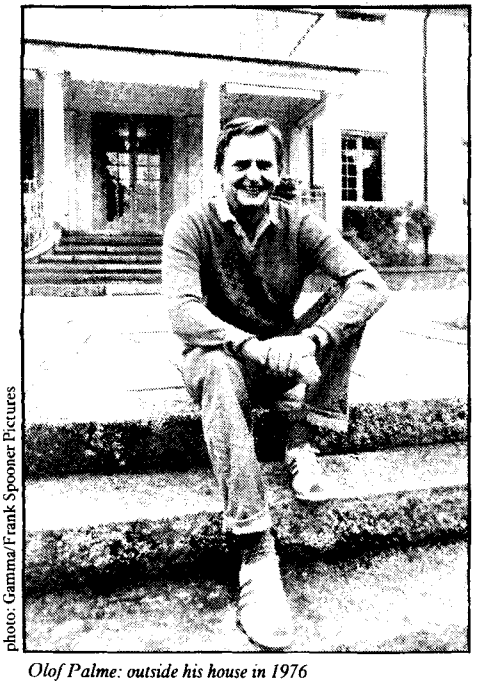

photo: Gamma/Frank Spooner Pictures

Olof Palme: outside his house in 1976

Palme was also made possible by his country, a successfully neutral country without a colonial past in living memory. On the other hand, the very geopolitical protectedness of his native country gave Palme's internationalism a chance to mature into the policy of a senior politician and later prime minister. The cold war was never really deep frozen in Sweden, and Sweden had no real stake in it. Up till the time of Palme, Swedish neutrality had kept a low profile, but the ground was so well prepared that neither Palme's 1965 Vietnam speech nor his co-demonstrating in 1968 with the Vietnamese ambassador to Stockholm was openly controversial within the Social Democratic party, a liability on his road to party leadership.

Finally, Palme was a man of his party. Swedish Social Democratic party leaders are well groomed and long lived. Palme was the fourth leader of 96-year-old party, and by the time of his assassination, he had led it for 16 years. When he was elected, in 1969, without rivals, Palme had been an initmate collaborator of his predecessor Erlander for 15 years. The SAP is a huge and complex machine, with collectively affiliated trade unions but without a block vote, and it takes great skill to keep it together. The six years of opposition, in 1976-82, put Palme to a tough test. He passed it rather well. A permanent but subtle concern with unity – delaying divisive decisions till a large majority has emerged, always keeping a cocked ear listening to the movement – consistent social reform, moderate or more radical according to the circumstances of pressures and constraints, and always holding forth an ideological vision were major means, elaborated by Erlander and deeply internalised in his successor.

The new party leader and prime minister, Ingvar Carlsson, has followed Palme's footsteps a few years later, although not into the Third World. Carlsson was also one of Erlander's 'boys' and has been Palme's closest party associate for at least a decade. At the end of the day, however, historical forces can only help to make sense of individuals, and never replace them. Olof Palme was unique, and his assassination means a great loss to all humane and progressive forces.

Göran Therborn

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Goodbye to the

Beatrix Campbell and Martin Jacques

The GLC's achievement under Ken Livingstone was remarkable. It became a genuinely popular local authority – something unknown to Londoners prior to 1981.

NOW THAT WE'RE saying goodbye to the GLC, it's worth reminding ourselves of life before the Left took power at County Hall. The Livingstone administration didn't come out of nowhere – it represented an attempt to learn from and at the same time break with forms of political administration associated with the grand old godfather of local government, Herbert Morrison.

The old GLC and LCC were the embodiment of the Morrisonian tradition. The organising principle was the management of local government, and the motto was the excellence of that management. The management, the Labour party, was to produce excellent administration and services for the clients who were the public. For labour it historically achieved the entrenchment of that client relationship with the party's public. It never empowered the people, but it produced at its best well-managed services which for a period were renowned throughout Britain and even internationally.

What started to undermine that tradition was the financial crisis that began to envelop local government in the late 60s and 70s. Labour's old relationship with its constituency began to fall apart in that period. Disillusionment and unrest characterised the cities and was completely unrepresented by Labour. Indeed, Labour in local government was the problem for ordinary people in many cities. Labour's County Hall administration hit that crisis just like everybody else, its 1973-7 council failing miserably to deliver on its main promises.

Class of 81

In 1977 a neo-Thatcherite regime was elected to County Hall. It set about splattering the elaborate Morrisonian local government structure. The housing function started to be redistributed to the boroughs and the frontiers of this strategic state authority were rolled back. Meanwhile, in opposition, the Left in the GLC Labour group dug itself deep into the London Labour party, and found a new generation of candidates to stand in the 1981 election. The 1981 GLC election produced the class of 81.

It was a very different kind of Labour group, populated by a new kind of Labour activist. They were people who had often acquired political skills and ideas from outside the administration of local government – through feminism, community politics, the student movement, the Vietnam campaign or wherever. Their view of local government had been radicalised by writings like those of Cynthia Cockburn on the local state and *Red Bologna*.

Because they hadn't lived their lives entirely in the Labour party moreover, they had a different relationship to the Left. They weren't those Labour godfathers who hate everybody who's not in the Labour party. They were people whose political life had encompassed alliances with Communists, with feminists, with trotskyists, with anarchists and Liberals. They were at least conscious of the new left politics of the 60s and 70s which was outside traditional parties. And therefore they didn't suffer from the same degree of sectarian resentment and fear.

The class of 81 was confronted with taking charge of an enormous institution in which they had to learn very quickly the skills of political administration. Most of them had, at most, previously been

IF YOU HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS WHEN THE GLC GOES, YOU'LL BE TALKING TO WHITEHALL.
IF THE GLC GOES, WHITEHALL MOVES IN.
HOW MUCH WILL THEY SQUEEZE OUT OF THE TUBE?
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E WHAT BE LIKE RUN TEHALL.
SAY NO TO NO SAY

local councillors. But because the political project was one they were very optimistic and brave about, they did not buckle in the face of the task. They had a manifesto that was extremely detailed and which had been unusually widely discussed, not least because the London media, particularly the *Standard*, had made a red scare out of it.

Now having a detailed, and much discussed, manifesto, doesn't in itself get you very far. Labour's 1983 general election manifesto had the same virtues. But it was in part an albatross. The 1981 one wasn't – because it was genuinely new, it grasped the realities it needed to confront, it glimpsed into the future, it wasn't a prisoner of the past. It was a beginning, it released energies, stimulated creativity, gathered momentum.

A strategic authority

What gave the GLC the extraordinary room for manoeuvre that it has ingeniously capitalised upon was that it was no ordinary local council. Indeed it wasn't local at all. It was a relatively rich strategic authority, performing the elaborate functions of metropolitan management.

Its responsibilities ranged from the South Bank high culture complex – now visited by a million more people a year because of the GLC's popularisation plans – to traffic lights. Consequently it was able to stand back and ask the big questions: about the culture of the city and who has access to what, who benefits from the subsidy that we give to the opera houses? Or, for example, do we want a city in which we get clogged up constantly by the private car and big lorries, or a cheap fares policy that is going to liberate the city from traffic congestion and also make it a place which working class people who live ten miles from the city centre can enjoy? Once feminism began to

the GLC felt unmistakably of the 80s

course through the committees they confronted problems like: what makes the city dangerous for women, how could it become a women's city, what would 'safe transport' mean, what were the political needs of mothers, what was the consequence of heterosexism?

There was another factor that 'liberated' the GLC, a negative one, a power that by and large it didn't have. Unlike most local authorities, it had very little housing in its command. Therefore it was unencumbered by what, above all, has discredited and ground down Labour local authorities: their authoritarian and undemocratic relationships to their constituents expressed through landlordism.

The GLC's position as a strategic authority had an added twist – London is the capital city. That at once made the GLC an institution of national importance. County Hall stares at the House of Commons across the Thames. The GLC had authority over national institutions on the South Bank and elsewhere. It had to get its mind around a city in which people not only worked and lived but also visited in their millions. London Transport caters not only for the people who live in London but also for many tourists. One thing the GLC never did, in this context, was to play off, in a shabby and philistine way, London as a capital and cosmopolitan centre, against the London of Londoners. Indeed, it did the opposite. It sought to make them work better together. This recognition of London as a capital was intimately linked to its recognition of London's cosmopolitanism, one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Europe. Previously, Labour had largely ignored this. Now it tried to profile London as it was, in all its diversity, new and old. This had another

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effect. It allowed the GLC to plug into the many powerful radical traditions that London has – be they associated with its ethnic communities or its position as a great artistic and cultural centre, or whatever. There is a *radical* London which the GLC explored and gave expression to in contrast to those London traditions which the Tories have traditionally profiled: the Queen, Buckingham Palace, the city, the Guards etc.

Cheap fares

Undoubtedly the issue which galvanised the GLC was the cheap fares policy. It was this issue which *made* the GLC popular, which struck a chord with millions of Londoners. And it wasn't just about cheaper travel. It was about rebuilding the commuter's relationship to the public transport system; about the crisis of traffic in London which is chronic; about democratising the city so that if you live in the working class suburbs of the outer perimeter, then central London is not unreachable; about having pleasure in the city rather than it being inaccessible because of cost. In short, how to make the city belong to the people again, how to make it more egalitarian, how to restructure it.

This was the turning point for the administration, the moment it because popular. Up to that point the GLC had been identified with the IRA and support for gays. Almost overnight that changed. It reminded people why they'd voted for it. What is more, the Tory and judicial response reinforced this. In trying to undermine the policy, and then subsequently turn London Transport into a quango, the Tories were seen as anti-London, and the GLC as pro-London. This was the moment when people became not just sympathetic to the GLC but actually began to be partisan about it, not pro-Labour, but pro-GLC, pro-London, a state of affairs which was consummated subsequently in the anti-abolition campaign.

The grants policy

A very innovative feature of the GLC was its grants policy. A disproportionate amount of the GLC's resources came from the rich boroughs and the City. The GLC sought to redistribute these resources, partly to the poor inner-city boroughs and partly to groups to do things themselves. In this latter context, it hugely expanded the voluntary sector, that whole army of agencies that house the homeless, provide facilities for the disabled, assist black and poor people's community organisations, fund play groups for kids and help sports clubs. At the very moment when the voluntary sector was being asset-stripped by the cuts, the GLC moved in and picked up the tab.

In supporting the voluntary sector, the GLC recognised that it was much better to allow groups to organise their own nurseries, if that's what they wanted to do. It allowed for the factor of self-determination, a quality of the voluntary sector which the Left has never really understood.

What the GLC did was develop a new concept of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. Thatcherism is strongly pro-voluntary sector, at least in rhetoric, and anti-statist. The Morrisonian tradition sees at best an essentially paternalist relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. In contrast, the GLC was pro-state and pro-voluntary sector, for a new symbiotic partnership. This was powerful stuff because it denied Thatcherism the high ground in the argument about initiative, enterprise and decentralisation. The GLC responded to the challenge in a way the Left has generally failed to do, to create a positive pro-state, pro-public solution. 'Do it for yourself' doesn't belong to the Left, but in the context of London it does. Instead of seeing the state – in this case the local state – as the fount of all things good and positive, the GLC saw the state in part as enabling the voluntary sector, as resourcing people in their own things, in being creative, in having an identity. Put more theoretically, the GLC was pro-civil society not just pro-state. That's a

the politicians learnt from *Red Bologna*

powerful potion, especially in London where civil society is highly developed, a dense and rich undergrowth of activities and organisations.

New constituencies

In its preparedness to see and profile London as it is, the GLC began to identify new constituencies previously unrecognised and buried by Labour's politics. The GLC's politics were heterogeneous. In a unique way, it crossed the boundaries of the Left's agenda. This was not least because of Ken – not only because of brilliant PR, but because of the issues which changed the political universe Londoners live in. It was Ken's commitment to causes like Sinn Fein and sexual politics which caused seizures not only in the media but in his own Labour group. Contrary to myth they actually made Labour more representative of Londoners. He broke with myopic notions of political majorities based on minimal and inoffensive programmes, by facing Labour's traditional support base with the lives of those it had shunned. He's been the only politician who's dared utter the kind of closet common sense that comments like 'well, we're all bisexual really' express.

For the first time, the cause and culture of gays and lesbians in London became associated with Labour. It identified gays and lesbians as *citizens* with civil rights, rather than deviants who were a civic nuisance. That was confirmed in the growing consciousness within the GLC itself, prompted by lesbian staff who challenged the limits of Livingstone's civil rights approach, that gays and lesbians were in fact citizens who subsidised the heterosexual community and got nothing but aggravation in return. It was an extraordinary moment for gays to feel that coming out wasn't simply a personal moral imperative, but that straight politicians were identifying with it too.

This *dynamic* within the GLC also applied to feminism and the ethnic minorities. The GLC discovered these areas as it went along. By establishing and heavily funding equal opportunities and ethnic minority units it enabled its own politics to expand and grow. These units – albeit with much struggle – came to inform other areas, including internal staffing policies (the atmosphere at County Hall was genuinely multiracial in a quite new way); the introduction of contract compliance (for the first time in Britain, and evidence of the GLC's progressive eclecticism, the idea being imported from the US), or arts policy (the GLC's cultural repertoire stretching from family fun days on the Thames, through a women's open-day at County Hall to the black experience festival).[1]

The GLC thereby began to define a new agenda. It not only resurrected the politics of rates and redistribution which had been buried by Labour's pessimism and Callaghan's sub-Thatcherism in the 1970s. It began to outline a new set of

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priorities – gender, race, sexuality – which will surely be a central part of the agenda of the 90s. And here was Labour actually taking responsibility for them, rather than assuming they are not political and thereby assigning this responsibility to other movements and organisations.

Now if Labour was to renew itself in London, it had no choice but to seek out

it broke with myopic notions of political majorities

and define these new constituencies, and interest groups. The traditional labour movement, and its old core constituencies are very weak in London. The manufacturing base is very small. The major sources of employment are increasingly the finance, administrative, service and cultural sectors. There now are but a handful of dockers. The printworkers face a not so dissimilar future. The old labour movement, in that sense, is becoming increasingly marginal. The trade union movement is very disparate – and the culture of the 'newer' unions is as yet less 'political' than the older traditions, being confined almost exclusively to the workplace. The GLC was thus obliged to break out and seek new relationships with a range of diverse constituencies, old and new.

Here, there and everywhere

To reach and define these constituencies, the GLC had to explore new forms of communication and style as well as policy. Livingstone was the epitome, a popular figure whom everyone could relate to, as at home on a tv chat show as at a Labour party meeting, Mr London no less. The GLC used press advertising and the billboards, hosted a plethora of popular entertainment, and had that GLC motif everywhere, from the Thames Barrier to the South Bank, from Crystal Palace to the London marathon. This visibility helped define the GLC in a different way, making it integral to the life of the city.

It also had a wider meaning. As new forms of communication have come to characterise life in the city – be it tv, press advertising, the billboards, or the plethora of entertainment – the labour movement has by and large failed to respond. It is invisible. Its cultural emphasis has remained backdated, out of time. Trade unions hardly exist outside the workplace. The Labour party as a *party* – as distinct from an administration – is mainly out of sight. This cultural absence makes the labour movement feel of the 40s or 50s. The GLC, on the other hand, felt unmistakably of the 80s. This absence of the labour movement serves to accentuate the fact that the emblems on the hoardings, in sports sponsorship or on tv are those overwhelmingly of the market, be it cornflakes or petrol. The labour movement, in absenting itself, has reinforced the market image as the modern image. There are exceptions of course, like CND and Greenpeace. But the GLC – with its pots of gold – was the exception *par excellence*. The advertising was not confined to abolition. They ran a long campaign for London as a nuclear-free zone. It was as sophisticated as commercial advertising but the images could hardly have been more contrasting.

Abolition

The abolition of the metropolitan councils, including the GLC, was contained in the 1983 Tory manifesto. Its inclusion at the time may well have had something to do with the early 'panics' about the IRA, gays and so on. But at root it was the use of the resources of the biggest local authority in Britain to support a new kind of radicalism that excited abolition. The whole cultural enterprise – the new social base that was being constructed, from the transport policy to the recruitment of women and black people to the fire brigade – was anathema to the Tories. But because the GLC had quite consciously plugged into what the city actually was, by putting all those bits of the life of the city that had previously been seen as non-political into the political agenda, it held the high-ground in the argument. The issue was defined not in party terms (the London Tories could not support abolition and found themselves hopelessly marginalised) but in terms of how London was going to be run. That was not simply an issue of 'us in the Labour party', but 'us running the GLC, an administration which you're involved in and interested in, and we're protecting from what they're trying to do'.

In the 1983 general election, the Tories argued the abolition case on the grounds of efficiency and economy. The GLC fought the issue on the needs and rights of London. It traded brilliantly on the scandal of losing your vote, together with people's pessimism about Whitehall and Westminster's lassitude in administration. In practice, the efficiency and economy argument was rapidly sidelined. It was replaced by a different priority, that of democracy. When that happened, the Tories lost the argument. This was a great achievement in two senses. Firstly, the power of Thatcherism has been its ability to set the political agenda and the weakness of the Left has been its failure to do that, its constant adjustment and adaptation to the agenda of the radical Right. Secondly, one of the issues on which the Left has got such a caning since 1979 is democracy, the trade unions being the notable example. For the GLC to seize the banner of democracy and use it against Thatcher was a remarkable feat.

The GLC fought the anti-abolition campaign in a style which matched the argument. From the outset the appeal was to virtually everyone, and certainly cross-party. Much of the advertising campaign targetted Tory voters in particular. Immediately after the 1983 election, Livingstone did fringe meetings at the Liberal, SDP and Tory party conferences in the autumn. This was at a time when sectarianism was at a high-water mark on the Labour Left, especially in its attitude towards the SDP. A later incident is worth recalling here. Livingstone and a number of others resigned to fight

the GLC was pro-civil society not just pro-state

by-elections as a sort of popular plebiscite on abolition. The Tories didn't stand but the Alliance did. When Livingstone was asked on tv, 'what happens if the Alliance wins and Labour is defeated', he replied to the effect that, 'it doesn't matter, because whatever happens an anti-abolition candidate will win'. This was dead against the grain of much left thinking which sees such cross-party attitudes either as a dilution of socialist politics or as unprincipled compromise. The GLC never made that mistake, never reduced the fight to defend a democratic right to a party interest. And ultimately, of course, the Labour GLC was the prime beneficiary of this approach. Eventually all the streams and tributaries flowed into the Labour administration at the GLC. All other political forces in London were marginalised. The net effect of this campaign with everything else was to make Labour truly popular in London. This, in retrospect, was remarkable. In

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1979, the idea that Labour – in the shape of the GLC – would be popular in London by the mid-80s was a dream. It turned out to be one of those rare dreams that actually come true.

And *the* problems . . .

We also need to strike a critical note here however. The two great *causes célèbres* of the GLC – cheap fares and abolition – won popular support in London. But on neither were people really actively mobilised. Take widespread cheap fares. Once the matter was out of the realms of the courts, and the council chamber, what kind of direct action could workers and commuters in the city take to defend a policy which was popular with both? What became apparent was nothing. In fact the worst thing happened, which was that action by either – the users or the producers of the service – appeared to be in conflict with the interests of the other. Strike action hit the commuters, not paying the fare hurt the workers. Nobody solved the problem. It was a sad ending.

This raises a wider question though. The GLC defined, sensitised, inspired new constituencies of support – ethnic groups, women, gays and lesbians, arts groups, transport users. It fashioned a new progressive coalition. But two things proved problematic in this enterprise and were never resolved, the Labour party and the trade unions. The Labour party remained essentially external to these developments, it did not feature as an active agent in the processes we have been describing and was never transformed by them. Likewise, the trade unions outside County Hall never found a new place, a new role for themselves. The politicians learnt from *Red Bologna*, but the trade unions didn't. In short, the GLC, an administration, was transformed, the labour movement was not.

This problem was clearly expressed in the rate-capping debacle. The GLC's attitude was no better than the boroughs. It fell for the same kind of rhetoric; an exaggeration of the imminent consequences, a completely unrealistic expectation of the kind of support that would be forthcoming from people on the ground. Livingstone appeared on a platform saying the people of London would bring London to a standstill. Unlike the fares issue, where they didn't go for anything they knew they couldn't pull off, the rate-capping campaign became shrouded in ultra-left rhetoric. Rate-capping required a long and subtle campaign, but they did the opposite, and it got bogged down in a hard left mentality. Now one of the reasons for this was that the rate-capping campaign wasn't just the GLC, it was all the London Labour authorities. It therefore reflected the currents in and temperature of the London Labour party more generally. It was a reminder of what hadn't changed, of the failure of wider reconstruction.

Be that as it may, the GLC stands as the *greatest* achievement of the labour movement since 1979. It shows what can be done. Creativity and imagination have been in desperately short supply in the labour movement, the GLC had bags. And look where it got them. Ken *is* London. Where are London's Tories and the Alliance now? We've had a glimpse of what the future can be – and it doesn't depend on a constant trimming of the sails. GLC – thanks, and we'll miss you. □

[1] Another important area of innovation, economic policy, is not considered here.

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illustration: Stuart Briers

A Flexible Future

BRITAIN'S DUAL LABOUR FORCE

The labour force is undergoing a profound change. Increasingly, it is being divided into a core and a periphery. The unions must find a creative response to the employers' drive for flexibility.

John Atkinson and Denis Gregory

FOR SOME TIME 'flexibility' in the labour market has been a central theme in business and government approaches to employment policy all over Western Europe. The term itself has become so widely used, encompassing such a wide range of ideological, structural, and institutional shifts, that it conjures up almost everything that conservative forces regard as necessary for economic and social regeneration; from privatisation to labour mobility and from paycutting to dismantling protective legislation. Unfortunately, an equal and opposite reaction dominates the thinking of the labour movement, where the response has been too much marked by denunciation and too little by analysis and the construction of an alternative approach.

This failure gives rise to two problems; first, because everybody favours flexibilty in the abstract, it means that the labour movement presents itself as inflexible and obstructive, and that the proponents of flexibility enjoy a psychological head start. Second, because the UK labour market has some of Europe's weakest legal protec-

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tions for workers, it means that flexibility initiatives in the UK tend to focus on union power and are in part intended to reduce and undermine effective workplace organisation. So the labour movement finds itself outmanoeuvred and in the firing line.

The flexibility offensive: what do the employers want?

It would be a mistake to think that employers in general have either a single objective in mind, or a consistent strategy for achieving greater flexibility[1]. Their objectives in securing it have differed widely from firm to firm. With some exceptions their approach has been opportunist and pragmatic, taking advantage of the current weakness of the unions and the high level of unemployment. But this evident lack of strategic purpose should not hide the extent of the transformation being introduced, albeit in a piecemeal and ad hoc manner. The flexibility offensive contains three interwoven objectives:

1) To increase their ability to adjust quickly and cheaply to a more uncertain, volatile and competitive market, and to an increased pace of technological change;

2) To continue the high rate of growth of productivity which marked the earlier years of the current recession, at a time when output and profitability are now rising;

3) To reduce employment costs either through using cheaper sources of labour or by using forms of labour, like temporary employment, which allow quick and cheap changes in the level of employment.

One of the main difficulties faced by trade unions is that these objectives are such a mixed bag. Few would seek to deny that the pace of technological change and the volatility and over-capacity of world markets requires a more ready and positive response from workers and employers alike. Yet when such a requirement is accompanied, as it often is, by pernicious employment practices, such as the casualisation of part of the workforce, then distinguishing the acceptable and necessary from the unacceptable and damaging is made more difficult. The fact that employers and government tend to lump all these together as positive goods is no excuse for the labour movement to do the same, simply attaching a different label.

Implementing flexibility

How are the employers setting about achieving these objectives and implementing their version of flexibility? the most important changes have involved the reorganisation of firms' internal labour markets, and their division into separate components, in which the worker's experience, and the employer's expectations of him/her, are increasingly differentiated. These groups are often referred to as core and peripheral groups; in the first, the core group, employers hope to achieve flexibility by stressing mutual long-term commitment, but in the second, the peripheral groups, by exposing workers more and more to raw market forces.

This division of the workforce is at the heart of the employers' version of flexibility. While its implementation is being encouraged by high levels of unemployment, by legal deregulation and by the weakness of the unions, we believe that this new division of labour will be a permanent feature of the labour market in years to come, because the market and technological pressures which have given rise to it are also likely to be permanent. Certainly, there is evidence of this division occurring on a major scale right across Western Europe. In the United States, and most obviously in Japan, it has existed for many years. The flexibility offensive may have been born of recession, but its consequences for workers will persist for much longer.

Core workers, peripheral workers and the flexible firm

There are lots of examples in the UK of firms which have begun to divide up their workers into obvious core and peripheral groups. Well-publicised developments in individual firms include Findus Foods' creation of new categories of temporary and casual workers[2], British Alcan's use of temporary employees to bring in extra smelting capacity as the market warrants[3], and the use of a supplementary workforce at Control Data at Brynmawr, which involved both part-time and temporary employment[4]. However, the division into core and peripheral groups can take many forms, and employers have a whole range of options open to them to fragment their workforces in ways which suit their particular circumstances.

the most important changes have involved the reorganisation of firms' internal labour markets

We can begin to understand this new division of labour better by asking how firms trying to achieve greater flexibility would reorganise their workforce; what might a new-style 'flexible firm' look like? Such a flexible firm[5] divides its workers into core and periphery because it seeks different kinds of flexibility from each group. Peripheral groups are brought in mainly to achieve greater flexibility in the number of workers employed (numerical flexibility). The firm simply needs more or less of them to match fluctuations in the level of output. So their contractual status and working time patterns are drawn up to reflect these fluctuations. The firm does not want such numerical flexibility from its core workers; rather it wants versatility and adaptability in what such workers do and how they do it, largely to reflect changes in technology rather than changes in output levels. We can call this functional flexibility. In effect, as the scale of the firm's operation changes so peripheral employment expands or contracts; as the nature of the operation changes, so core workers acquire and deploy new skills in different jobs but enjoy greater continuity of employment than peripheral workers.

The diagram below shows the main components from which UK firms select various combinations of these different groups of worker. Around its outer edge the flexible firm may deploy a number of external sub-contracting groups; agencies supplying temporary staff; commercial sub-contractors; specialist self-employed workers on particular projects or short-term, fee-based contracts; or simply, other firms which it uses to take on some or all of the activities of the organisation on an outsourcing basis, for example, component and sub-assembly suppliers. These form the first band of numerical flexibility for the flexible firm. Their use can be expanded and contracted relatively quickly, cheaply and without disruption, because they are not even employees of the firm.

There is also a second band providing numerical flexibility made up of workers who are directly employed by the firm. These workers may simply be excluded from career status and experience a 'hire and fire' regime which reduces expectations of continuity of employment (Group 1). Alternatively, as in Group 2, they may be brought in on contracts of employment which are explicitly temporary; or recruited from groups with such relatively high levels of turnover that a policy of non-replacement can easily reduce their numbers; or employed under arrangements designed to bring them to work only when required, for example, part-timers and casuals. Another group might be public subsidy trainees working in the com-

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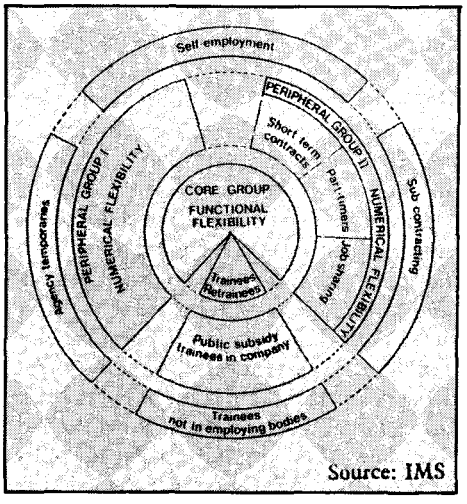

pany, for example under the Youth Training Scheme.

At the centre is the core group – employees who are expected to deliver the functional flexibility which the flexible firm requires. They are likely to demonstrate some important common features:

* *Firm-specific skills:* Peripheral groups only supply skills which can readily be found on the external labour market. At the core, the firm seeks both to develop and retain the skills and competencies which are specific to itself and cannot be easily bought-in. It is therefore willing to invest in training to produce these skills.

* *Blue/white collar mix:* It is a mistake to assume that core group workers are necessarily the most highly skilled workers; they are the most relevantly skilled workers to the firm's main activities. For example, the core group of an engineering firm would probably contain its maintenance workers as well as the managing director.

* *Training and redeployment*: Given the emphasis on versatility at the core, there is likely to be a higher proportion of core workers undergoing retraining at any one time than is usual. Further, their training needs to equip them with general problem-solving and diagnostic skills as well as straightforward task-oriented ones.

* *Continuity of employment*: By definition peripheral workers are likely to experience a rather precarious form of employment, but to the extent that they soak up fluctuations in demand for labour, so the core worker enjoys continuity of employment.

The extent of segmentation

Of course, the flexible firm is only an analytical tool to help us understand what is going on. In practice, the number of UK firms which exactly demonstrate the precise segmentation outlined here are few in number, tend to be foreign owned, and are concentrated into particular sectors. But the flexible firm is more than just a figment of our imagination; the tendencies towards the segmentation of the internal labour market which it embodies are widespread and growing, and national labour market data confirm this.

In the service sector, the dominant form of peripheral working is part-time labour; for example, in some areas of retailing, part-time jobs now account for some 80% of the workforce. As is well-known, part-time employment has been the only area of employment to demonstrate significant growth since 1979, and while part of this is simply due to growth of the service sector, part of it is also the result of employers consciously seeking to use numerically flexible part-time labour to displace full-time employment.

In manufacturing, temporary employment and sub-contracting are the dominant forms of peripheral employment. There are no data on the use of sub-contractors, but jobcentre placement records show that temporary contracts of employment have grown from about 20% of all placements in 1979 to about 35% currently.

The use of self-employed workers has also grown in both manufacturing and services in recent years and the national statistics reflect this, but it is unclear how much this growth reflects firms pushing workers into self-employment (as happens in the insurance industry with sales staff, for example), or the unemployed starting up on their own. The widespread shift to these peripheral forms of employment can be seen in evidence contained in papers to the December meeting of the NEDO Council. This showed that of the 72 firms covered, nine out of 10 had increased the numerical flexibility of their workforces since 1980, largely through the growth of peripheral forms of employment.

There is no doubt that such peripheral forms of employment have grown considerably in the UK since the onset of recession, but there is much less evidence on the development of protected, secure core groups. The NEDC paper referred to above showed that it was largely manufacturing employers who had taken significant steps since 1980 to secure greater functional flexibility from their workers. Apart from this there is simply no evidence on which we can assess how far such core groups are developing in the UK.

It should be clear that the development of an employers' offensive over flexibility is likely to restructure the labour market in ways which have the most profound consequences for workers and their trade unions. We have demonstrated the sort of changes which the flexibility initiative appears to be introducing; at their simplest they boil down to security and incorporation for the few, bought at the expense of deterioration of conditions of employment for the many.

The union response

As with employers, the response of unions to the notion of flexibility at the workplace appears to be neither consistent nor unified. Two important distinctions should be made; firstly we should note the difference between official/national statements and local collectively bargained outcomes. It is clear that despite the more-or-less uniform rejection of flexibility initiatives by many unions nationally, local negotiations have frequently accepted such management initiatives, and these cannot always be characterised as reluctant acquiescence. Although there are many cases of rampant management unilateralism, not least that now seen at Wapping, most of the changed working practices have been introduced through collective bargaining, albeit bargaining involving a somewhat weakened union position. There is a clear gap emerging between the rhetoric of resistance and the reality at the place of work.

The second distinction exists both within some unions, but more importantly, between them. It concerns the different national responses which have emerged. A crude typology might list four basic positions:

a) The 'it's-not-really-happening' approach. This holds that new management initiatives to secure flexibility through workforce restructuring are confined to one or two isolated instances. As such they require no change in the traditional trade union approach to organisation and recruitment.

the response of unions to the notion of flexibility at the workplace appears to be neither consistent nor unified

b) The 'we've-seen-it-all-before' approach. This argues that the proponents of workplace flexibility are simply re-visiting the familiar territory of productivity bargaining. Unions survived productivity deals; so, it is argued, they will survive flexibility agreements.

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c) The 'just-wait-till-we're-back-on-our-feet' approach. A contention that accepts that changes detrimental to union strength are taking place but only as a result of management taking advantage of recession-linked conditions and of anti-union legislation. In other words, it is simply a case of unions holding on until either economic growth, or a Labour government restores the conditions for union power at the workplace.

d) The 'we're-alright-Jack' approach which recognises that there are substantial advantages to be secured for individual workers in acquiring core status, and for a union which can represent them. This approach often trades the acceptance of flexibility for an employment security pledge and possibly a single-union agreement.

None of the approaches listed offer any unifying analysis; they are no more than a series of defensive postures. Indeed, they do not even add up to an effective defence, far less counterpose a union demand for the flexibility that workers need to the dominant managerial view of flexibility. Nonetheless, current union responses can largely be located within these parameters. The TUC have recently tried to outline a more positive approach. In a paper considered by the Employment Policy Committee (EPOC) in January it is argued that: '. . . even during a period in which the bargaining climate has been severe sufficient cases can be found which between them point the way towards a creative trade union response to the flexibility fashion'.

So, are the TUC alive to the potential threats of the 'flexibility fashion'? Certainly, in last year's Economic Review they spelled out some of the worst effects of the government's legislative programme (actual and proposed) specifically designed to make flexibility an easier option for employers. But by attacking the legislated basis for flexibility they imply a legislated solution, thus, perhaps unwittingly, lending tacit support to the 'hold-on-for-a-Labour-government' approach. Moreover, the reference to flexibility as a 'fashion' plainly connotes it as a temporary phase. Add to this the TUC's view that most management strategies aimed at casualisation are so much 'old wine in new bottles' and it starts to become clear that the TUC see no new or permanent threat in the flexibility offensive.

To what extent is this an adequate analysis and how effective might the past experience of unions prove to be? In one sense the TUC are correct: employers have always tried to undermine the collective strength of a workforce by promoting divisions within it and there is nothing particularly new in the ways in which such divisions are currently being forced (although it could be argued that the emergence of YTS is a new feature at the workplace). What has changed, however,

in manufacturing, temporary employment and sub-contracting are the dominant forms of peripheral employment

is the balance of power in the labour market which has amplified the scale and effect of these divisions far beyond the levels which prevailed before 1979.

The changing terrain: something old, something new

The main elements active in the reshaping of this balance of power in the labour market (whether at enterprise, industry or regional level) appear to be:

* Permanent mass unemployment, which not only provides the 'reserve army of labour' (already swollen by a growing population of working age and the increasing participation of women workers) but also sets up an invidious conditioning process whereby those in employment live in fear of the dole queue whilst those unemployed become increasingly desperate for a job on any terms ('anything is better than the dole').

* Deregulating legislation, aimed at reducing employment security and promoting the increased use of 'insecure employment' in all sectors of the economy. Hence, the growth of part-time working under 16 hours per week and fixed short-term contracts of less than 12 months, both intended to avoid legislative controls.

* Anti-union legislation designed to undermine the ability of unions to resist management actions which threaten job security and terms and conditions of employment.

* A significant reduction in the number of manufacturing workplaces where a large number of workers are grouped together on one site. These have traditionally formed the bedrock of union organisational strength. The number of manufacturing establishments employing more than 1,000 workers on one site dropped from 908 in 1979 to 768 in 1984[6].

* The trend towards the decentralisation of some management control structures (eg, the new regional management structure at BT) which are providing management at workplace level with more discretion and authority over the organisation and deployment of the specific workforce.

The list is not exhaustive. We can add to it a number of factors which predate the onset of recession in 1979, such as the shifts in employment from manufacturing to services and from men to women, or the application of new technologies across the economy. It is the combination of these long-term changes with the more recent recession-based changes that lends both a sharper cutting-edge and a degree of permanence to the flexibility offensive.

Looking just at these 'newer' elements, it is plainly unreasonable to expect an incoming Labour government to rid the labour market of their influence at a stroke of the legislative pen. Far less will it remove the long-term trends.

Protective legislation can and should be replaced; if, for example, German workers can be competitive while enjoying legal protection and minimum standards far ahead of those in the UK, then such legislation cannot be seriously presented as a constraint on flexibility. Similarly, anti-union legislation can be repealed and replaced with an Employees' Bill of Rights which will enforce the right to effective trade unionism.

However, important though these parliamentary interventions will be, they will not, of themselves, reduce the supply of 'insecure labour'. No realistic party supporter expects a Labour government to be able to reduce unemployment much below the 2m mark in the first few years of office. Hence, the divisive pressures exerted by high unemployment on the labour market are likely to persist in the medium term.

In addition, the trend away from very large workplaces (in employment terms) seems likely to continue. Although such a trend originates in the changing nature of capital equipment and its associated control and information networks, management has learned that workforces broken into smaller units are more 'manageable', ie, are less likely to feel alienated and therefore more difficult for unions to organise and motivate. This, coupled with the more effective and subtle communication techniques like briefing groups and quality circles, which are increasingly part of the responsibility being devolved to local man-

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agements, will, in all probability, further undermine the ability to organise effectively at site level.

A positive union response

If we accept then, that workers are unlikely to find shelter from managerial flexibility initiatives, still less promote their own needs, without effective union organisation, we need to consider how such organisation might fare under the segmented and divisive internal labour market outlined earlier. The difficulties of recruiting and effectively organising a peripheral workforce should be obvious; with a host of attendance patterns, contractual arrangements and, above all, competing groups of workers, finding and exploiting common interests and welding them into collective solidarity is unlikely to be readily achieved. It is less obvious that equally serious difficulties surround the organisation of core workers into trade unions; to the extent that they enjoy employment security, that they are paid on a merit-based pay system, that they enjoy single status conditions of employment and that they are not subject to a hierarchical and authoritarian form of control at work, it is not certain how far the traditional appeal of unionism will extend to such employees. Moreover, what is certain is that without site level organisation to police compliance with legislation, much of the protective thrust of any such legislation is likely to be dissipated.

So, in view of the likelihood of continuing high levels of unemployment and of the problems for effective union organisation implicit in the segmented labour market itself, it seems fair to conclude that unions adopting dismissive or 'heads down and hold on' strategies will probably find management initiatives in pursuit of greater flexibility increasingly difficult to counter. Moreover, even singular victories like that of the manual unions in resisting Ford's demands for individual productivity and flexibility pledges as part of the recent pay negotiations are unlikely to see employers backing off. At present and foreseeably, they have both the time and market pressures (in order to compete we must be efficient, to be efficient we must be flexible) with which to subvert the traditional identity between the worker and the union.

The TUC are surely right to stress the need for positive and creative union responses to management's pursuit of flexibility. As a precondition it is important to introduce some clearly defined prospective gains for the workforce into the frame. All the available evidence suggests that by far the main beneficiaries have been management. There are, however, opportunities to inject elements into the bargaining agenda which will at least force the consideration of flexibility on the unions' as well as managements' terms.

The objective, from a union point of view, must be to produce a bargaining response which furnishes some real benefits from flexible working arrangements without sacrificing union strength. Hence, the strategies adopted by unions must be perceived to be relevant and appropriate to all the workforce within their operational influence. This would begin to limit the ability of management to drive wedges into the union position and thereby force false choices between servicing supposedly 'secure' core workers at the expense of the less secure periphery.

Flexibility on workers' terms

There seem to be several avenues which might usefully be followed here:

1 *Organise core workers*: there is only one place in the fragmented labour market which we described earlier from which unions can bargain from strength. It is to be found among those workers whose skills, commitment and co-operation firms value most highly – their core workforces. Achieving or indeed maintaining union influence here is likely to require new approaches, particularly since unions will find themselves in competition with employers for influence over this group. So what are the bargaining issues to attract such workers? One might be the issue of explicit employment security; unions might usefully press British employers much closer to Japanese lifetime employment policies for these workers. Another issue might be greater access to training opportunities; if the sphere of collective bargaining could be opened up to include enhanced training, both employer and employee would gain. A third might be to secure greater autonomy at work for these workers, both in terms of control over their work assignments and their working time patterns. By exploring the new priorities of such a bargaining group, unions could push out this strength to begin to defend the interests of peripheral workers. After all core workers have a very real interest in not being undercut by cheap peripheral labour.

no realistic party supporter expects a Labour government to be able to reduce unemployment much below the 2m mark

2 *Extending union influence to the periphery*: so, in parallel with directly organising peripheral workers, unions could exploit the strength of core workers to establish the conditions under which peripheral working could be accepted. Such arrangements would surely seek to (a) limit the scale of peripheral employment to an absolute minimum, (b) ensure pro rata terms and conditions of employment for peripheral workers, (c) open up access to bridges between periphery and core, and thereby (d) limit the enforced duration of workers in peripheral status to a minimum. Similarly, where peripheral workers were not employees of the flexible firm, minimum standards could be established, outside of which, for example, a subcontractor or agency employee would not be accepted on site.

3 *Promote alternatives to peripheral status*: in pressing to limit peripheral working, unions would need to push employers to find other ways of adjusting output to unanticipated variations in demand rather than employing a temporary peripheral workforce. One alternative could be the rescheduling of working time through some sort of annual hours contract or similarly the rescheduling of holidays. Another could be the temporary leasing of workers between local firms. Another could be the redeployment of surplus workers to training. If employers prefer to use cheap peripheral workers, then it is up to the unions to promote more efficient and less divisive alternatives.

4 *Recruiting peripheral workers*: many unions have seen the need to recruit part-time workers and fight for pro-rata terms and conditions for these workers. Plainly, this basic approach could be extended to cover all the categories of peripheral workers. Successful organisation among such workers might provide the springboard to fuse their terms and conditions with those of the core group.

None of this is to deny a role for legislative intervention, nor the need for adequate state benefit arrangements for peripheral workers if they are laid off. It is simply to suggest that there are avenues within the scope of collective bargaining which can begin to provide a counter-offensive against the most pernicious aspects of the employers' flexibility drive, without fall-

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ing into the trap of denying the necessity for some forms of flexibility. It may also lay the foundations for the development of a workers' initiative to promote and secure their own, and distinctive, flexibilities; these might include access to training and retraining, study leave and sabbaticals, the ability to shift from full time to part time and back without detriment, the enhancement of choice over working time, and the enlargement of control over the pace and organisation of work. In this version of flexibility the construction of a skilled, trained, secure and highly motivated workforce would be seen as of equal or greater importance to economic advance than any amount of entrepreneurial or managerial energy.

A broad union strategy which confronted employers' flexibility demands with countervailing demands for employment security, investment in training and equality of treatment for all workers might prove an effective means of redistributing some of the benefits of efficiency through flexibility to the totality of the labour force. As a unifying response to a management strategy which threatens to fragment the union movement at enterprise level, it has much to commend it. □

1 We do not discuss governmental flexibility initiatives, which are primarily about wage fixing. For a critique, see Flexibility and Jobs: Myths and Realities ETUI 1985.

2 Incomes Data Services Ltd. 'Two-stage 6 plus 3% pay increase at Findus', *IDS Report 449* May 1985.

3 M Brown 'Alcan goes casual' *The Guardian* 16 January 1985.

4 R Leek 'Flexible Manning in Practice: Control Data' *Manpower Policy and Practice* vol 1 summer 1985.

5 J Atkinson 'Flexibility, Uncertainty and Manpower Management' *IMS Report No 89* September 1984.

6 *Business Monitor* PA 1003 'Analysis of UK manufacturing (local) units by employment size' 1979, 1984.

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Suddenly the image of the Soviet Union in the world has changed. Immobility has given way to initiative and dynamism. In superpower relations, Gorbachev has seized the high ground. At home 'change' dominates the agenda.

WILL GORBACHEV SHAKE THE WORLD?

A roundtable discussion

The participants in the roundtable are: Wlodzimierz Brus, a fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford and author of *Socialist Ownership and Political Systems*; Monty Johnstone, a writer on Soviet and East European politics and a member of the Communist party executive committee; and David Lane, professor of sociology at Birmingham University and author of *Soviet Economy and Society*. It is chaired by Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*.

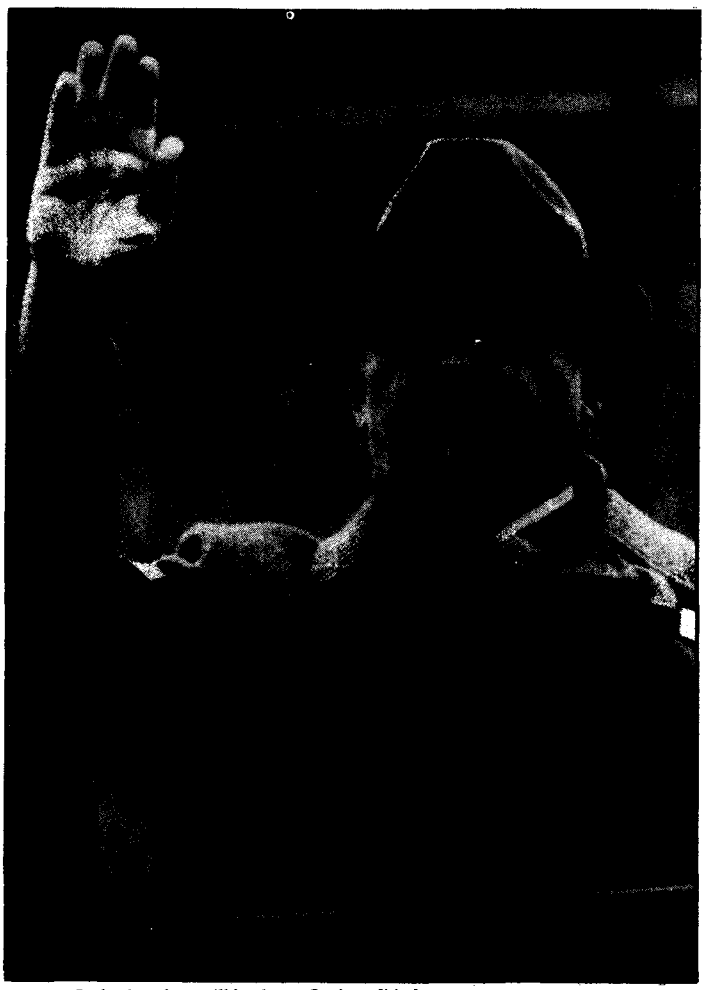

photo: camera press

Michael Gorbachev: how will he change Soviet politics?

photos: Robert Aberman

The participants from left to right: Wlodzimierz Brus, Monty Johnstone and David Lane.

It has been suggested that the recent CPSU congress represents a turning point in Soviet history akin to the 20th congress in 1956. To what extent is that the case?

Monty Johnstone It's a turning point to the extent that it represents a recognition by the party leadership of mistakes and gives priority to reversing declining growth rates by new policies for reform and modernisation. And accompanying this, there is a rejuvenation in the leadership with a younger general secretary and the replacement of a whole number of other leaders by younger people. In a number of respects there are similarities with 1956, which attempted to break with what had been a stalinist past and to set the Soviet Union on a new course, including modernisation in a certain sense. Like the present congress it also emphasised important initiatives by the new leaders to promote peaceful coexistence. On the other hand, this congress was in no way as dramatic as the 1956 20th congress with the denunciation of Stalin's terror in Khruschev's secret speech, and of course there was nothing as horrible to denounce. As far as the question of the position of the congress in history is concerned, it's too early really to compare it with the 20th congress. The 20th congress had enormous repercussions both in the Soviet Union itself and in the other socialist countries and throughout the world communist movement – repercussions that can still be felt at the present time. How far the 27th congress will do this we just don't know yet.

Wlodzimierz Brus In my opinion there is no comparison. I would ask a more limited question, 'can it be described as a

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turning point?' From an economic point of view, in some respects it may be regarded as a turning point. Firstly, it was acknowledged for the first time at this congress that the Soviet economy has lost any kind of dynamism. Previously, this was denied, it was of no official concern for Soviet leaders, the contrary in fact. Secondly, although this was not made entirely clear, by implication it was admitted that the causes of this were to some extent a product of the economic system. Of course the previous leadership was blamed first of all, but also some element of systemic explanation was implicitly acknowledged. In this sense, it does represent some kind of turning point. But two particular facts prompt me to respond to this question of a turning point in a negative way. Firstly, there was an absence of any profound analysis as to what the systemic causes were, apart from general talk about bureaucracy, lack of discipline and so on. Secondly and more seriously, there was no concreteness as to the measures which have to be undertaken. These two factors of course are linked: when you don't analyse the reasons, you can't state clearly what measures need to be taken.

David Lane I don't think that it's comparable to the 1956 congress in its scope or as a turning point. If anything, it would be more useful to compare it with the 22nd party congress in 1961. Nonetheless, the tenor and emphasis within this congress changed considerably towards a real concern with the problems of Soviet development. Some of the reasons for this change of emphasis and tone are to do with the changed political culture in the Soviet Union. In 1959, for instance, only about 9m people had been through higher education compared with 18m in 1982. Now the largest sector of the economy is in services (including communications), which makes the occupational structure much more akin to those of Western societies. These are new realities, new pressures. The message of this congress is that the party is out to modernise Soviet society.

What differentiates the Brezhnev era from what might be beginning to develop now?

David In the Brezhnev era, the leadership was prepared to sustain slow growth in the the economy. It was not prepared to face up to a number of key internal problems whereas the present leadership has an emphasis on 'acceleration' – growth, investment and efficiency.

Wlodek I don't accept any kind of uniform 'Brezhnev era'. Since the mid 1950s there has been a declining growth rate. The only time when this trend was reversed was 1966-70, which was the beginning of the 'Brezhnev era'. As we know the 'Brezhnev era' started with an attempt at economic reform, the most far-reaching so far in the Soviet Union as far as relations between the centre and the enterprises are concerned. Talk of a 'Brezhnev era' is merely an attempt to find an easy way out of the problem. This first part of the 'Brezhnev era' ended, in my view, with the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. This was immediately the sign for a retreat as far as the reforms were concerned, both in the Soviet Union and East European countries, with the exception of Hungary to a limited extent. The latter phase of the 'Brezhnev era' showed, with the resumption of declining growth rates, that the improvement was only short-lived, that the underlying and accumulating problems had not been solved. Now I expect in the first period of Gorbachev's rule some sort of an upswing. But the central question is to what extent can it be sustained and the longer-term trend reversed. That requires an analysis, so far lacking, of the real causes of this inertia and loss of dynamism in the Soviet economy.

Monty The problem Wlodek poses of how far the initial impetus will be maintained is a crucial one. Its paramount importance is recognised, and it is planned that growth rates should rise more rapidly in the 1990s than in the present five-year plan. But I accept that this does not of itself mean that they'll succeed.

What are the main problems of the Soviet economy and what do you think will be done about them?

Wlodek The Soviet economy, with that brief exception of the late 60s, has long been subject to a declining growth rate. Prior to Khruschev it was 10%, he anticipated 8.5% which was not achieved. The average under Brezhnev was higher than that postulated by Gorbachev until 2000, namely an average of 4.7%, which is low compared with the 70s.

In the 1970s, the Soviet economy, like the Opec countries, benefited from the big increase in oil prices, a situation which of course is now being reversed. Now one of the central problems of the Soviet economy has been – in a situation of growing scarcity at home and internationally, exemplified by the oil question – its inability on the one hand to improve labour productivity sufficiently and on the other hand to use resources more economically. It remains an extremely wasteful economy. This is the main economic problem, apart form the special issue of agriculture which has grown only 1.1% per annum over the last five years. This economic slowdown, in a situation of increasing scarcities lies very deep in the economic system. There is now some recognition of this, and obviously a desire to break the impasse, after all Gorbachev doesn't want to preside over a stagnating economy. But the question is to what extent this will be translated into real measures, and this was my main doubt when I read the congress material.

David I think in the fields of management and labour the Soviet economy can be improved considerably. In the area of labour productivity there is a great deal of inefficiency which was recognised at the Congress and also in widespread discussion in the Soviet press. The policies on incentives will surely enhance productivity. The proposals on the rate and kind of investment and the writing off of capital will also lead to hikes in productivity.

So what do you expect to happen in the area of economic reform? How radical will it be?

Wlodek There is a lack of clarity which may be justified by certain political considerations. For example, Gorbachev never used the term 'market' with regard to the reforms which he wants to introduce. Maybe because he doesn't want to create unnecessary ideological difficulties. Maybe one should read between the lines, that he does want to introduce some market regulation but doesn't want to call it that. There are, in my view, two main elements involved in a radical reform. One is the target or command plan, which fosters the hiding of resources and so on. And the second is the physical allocation of producer goods. Now nothing has been said about the dismantling of these.

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Changing the image of the leader: handshaking in the street is now important.

There is the so-called comprehensive experiment, which in 1987 will be extended to the entire economy, but this leaves a lot of the old system intact.

Monty I would agree about the vagueness at an official level, but it does seem to me there is more discussion going on albeit in relatively restricted circles. And this could be a preliminary to bringing these questions before a wider public.

David The political leadership is doing a great deal to bring in a new spirit of discipline, efficiency and accountability in the organisation of the economy. The central ministries have been singled out as institutions which have been a break on progress and they are to be put under greater control. The intention to give factories greater independence, and within factories to give work brigades more initiative is likely to have a salutory effect on improving output. By enhancing the organsation of the system, creating a psychological atmosphere in which efficiency will be given a greater priority, a considerable economic advance can be achieved.

Monty In a sense, there are two contradictory points. On the one hand, there is a greater awareness on the part of Gorbachev and the people associated with him of the need to take more drastic measures than were taken in the past precisely because previous reforms such as those in 1965 have run out of steam. On the other hand, it's not enough to have a correct policy, and it's not enough to have leaders who recognise certain steps need to be taken. It's also necessary to have large sections of the population, including the leaders at the lower levels, prepared to go along with it. In that respect, the negative experiences of the past make it more difficult to activate people because their hopes have been raised in similar ways and then disappointed. This is the major problem if this potentially very hopeful development with Gorbachev is actually going to be sustained.

To what extent is the underlying problem that of an old centralised system was very well equipped to handle certain kinds of problems like industrialisation and the war, but which is ill-equipped to deal with what is now a much more sophisticated and complex economy and society?

Wlodek This *is* the problem, the extent to which the system can cope with present-day problems. I agree with David that the main emphasis of the leadership at the moment is to change the spiritual aspects, the atmosphere, the discipline and so on. This, of course, was the Andropov line and it is also Gorbachev's. Now this can mobilise immediate reserves which were previously hidden because less emphasis had been placed on them. And the less emphasis on them in the past, the more slack you have in the economy to mobilise. But this is a once and for all gain which can only be short-lived. You are then stuck again. The reliance on the psychological and spiritual is, I fear, much too great. I am not a great believer in the long-term effects of exhortation.

David A lot of the centralisation which occurred during the Stalin period was to do with the nature of the intellectual and physical capital of a developing society. But the intellectual resources are now much better and 'intensive' growth is possible. The educational level of specialists, managers and workers is much higher than it was. The kind of changes that Gorbachev has in mind will meet with a response from a large proportion of the population. People will be able to work is a situation of less centralisation and control than they had hitherto, and the reserves available in the economy will be better utilised. People will also be able to show more initiative and participation in running things.

Gorbachev has said quite a lot about the need to 'deepen and extend democracy'. What do you think is meant by that?

Monty A great deal of emphasis was laid in Gorbachev's report on this. He argued that the economic and social objectives set were inconceivable without the greater participation of the people, the improvement of socialist democracy and so on. But the problem in discussing this at the moment is on the economic questions. There was a reference, for instance, to the need to overhaul the electoral procedures in the Soviet Union, but no indication as to what would be done. Whether for instance, there is any consideration of having multi-candidate elections, or even two candidates, as is happening in Hungary and some other socialist countries. And apparently nobody, as I understand it, actually took up this point at the congress. There is a great deal of talk, and it's been a theme which Gorbachev has stressed ever since he became general secretary of an increase in publicity and information. Now there have been improvements in the Soviet press and so on, but with considerable limitations, even in the economic sphere where I notice that even today the grain production statistics are not published, as they haven't been for several years since they began to have real problems meeting targets. Take the question of debate. I understand that throughout the congress there was no clash of opinion among the delegates. This, I know, has been traditional since 1927, but a development of genuine socialist democracy requires that one begins to have a position where differences of opinion which undoubtedly are debated in private at the top actually come out into the open. That has not yet happened. My final point in this context is that it may well be that the need for democratic participation in order to achieve success in the carrying out of the new economic plans will push Gorbachev and the other leaders to loosening things up in this respect and going considerably further than they have done so far.

David A number of very positive things have come out from the congress. There is an intention to make people who are in positions of authority accountable. This is connected with the anti-corruption campaign and a number of speakers referred to the importance of *all* people being accountable for their actions.

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The leadership has also talked about increasing the role of trade unions in their defence of workers. A number of suggestions have also been made about forming councils in enterprises drawn from the trade union, party, komsomol and other groups. These are all movements in the right direction. Another thing clear in the congress is the emphasis on party control, which undoubtedly increase as a means of more effectively curbing the bureaucracy.

Monty I personally think there is considerable potential flowing from this congress and the changes that have been taking place since Gorbachev took over. But I would need to see in practice what happens before I was very definite on it. You see many of the things that David quotes don't convince me. The fact that there is reference to the need for the trade unions to play a more critical role in defending workers is not new. Exactly the same thing was said even by Stalin and many times subsequently. As far as a commitment to accountability is concerned, this has been standard. The present Soviet constitution, adopted in 1977, contained a special provision that citizens could appeal to a court 'in the manner prescribed by law' against officials infringing their rights. We learn from Gorbachev's speech that they are now proposing nine years later to introduce the law which is going to make this possible. They haven't passed it yet. It's not a question of declarations of intent, but seeing what happens in practice. One further point. So long as the nomenklatura system operates, where it is the party which is responsible for deciding who is eligible to fill the key posts in the state apparatus, the economy, the trade unions and considerable other parts of the social sphere, there are going to be very serious limitations on a genuine democracy.

Wlodek There are some interesting and hopeful elements but they are very minor and second-ranking in significance. I attach most importance to the new 'councils of the workers collective', or workers councils. But the role of these councils depends in the first instance on the real scope of decision-making in the enterprises and this remains unclear, although it is said it will increase. Real influence here is linked to the possibility of electing managers, or at least having an influence on management election, and this starts to clash with the nomenklatura principal.

Now Monty made an important point about there being no sign of any sort of disagreement at the congress. It was as boring as it was before, and much more boring than the Soviet papers have recently been. Another example of how things haven't changed is the way many changes of position, for example partly first secretaries is the republics, were announced *before* the congress, often just before. The congress was presented with a fait accompli. In my view, there have been no examples of a real extension of the democratic process within the leading institutions. And this is extremely important for economic renewal. You cannot have a more efficient economic system within the framework of the, in my view, old obsolete political system. This is the key question. The leadership, moreover, shows a clear tendency to keep all the reins very firmly in their hands, even more so as David rightly said, while at the same time arguing for more initiative, independence and so on. This, for me, was the worrying sign. It is easy to criticise the past leadership. The first big break, the real turning point, will be when someone comes out and criticises the existing leadership.

Would you explain the limited nature of developments so far in terms of Gorbachev's own relatively weak position within the party apparatus prior to the congress or is it already a defining characteristic of Gorbachev's political project?

Monty It's impossible to say. I wrote an article for *Marxism Today* a year ago, for which I was violently attacked in the Soviet Union. In this I suggested that fairly soon we were going to see a new leadership which I thought would be headed by Gorbachev, but that whoever was selected for the leading position would have to satisfy the party leadership that he was not in danger either of being a new Khruschev or a new Dubcek. Now whether, despite these considerations, which I am sure weighed very heavily in the minds of the party leadership that elected him, we'll find that he either has ideas which go well beyond, as far as democracy is concerned, what the people who elected him were prepared to countenance or whether the actual pressures on him in occupying the position and in trying to pursue the economic objectives will force him to go considerably further than he previously envisaged, I just don't know.

Wlodek I don't know either. But certainly I wouldn't contemplate even mentioning the name of Dubcek in this context, because there are clear signs already of a broad ideological offensive against the term political pluralism.

Monty My reference to Dubcek was precisely to say that I don't think such political pluralism is on the cards at the moment. But there is a certain *de facto* pluralism already existing in the Soviet Union, including the political sphere. Take the letter in *Pravda* on February 13 from old Communists criticising the special stores

A new political style: Gorbachev meets the workers.

and other privileges of party officials. And then we had the press conference that Aliev, a member of the politbureau, gave to the foreign press in which he was asked about these privileges and attempted to justify them and say they needed to have special shops for party officials because they worked 24 hours a day.

Wlodek This is not pluralism.

Monty I will limit it even further if you like, a minimal *de facto* pluralism, but from minimal *de facto* pluralisms can grow phenomena that could push forward political changes.

It's not a structural pluralism, but permitted pluralism. It's allowed to exist but it's not in any way institutionalised.

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Monty It's certainly not institutionalised. It exists and enables different views to be expressed, where there are no structures to facilitate this. The important question is either it will develop as a part of the necessary conditions for the participation of the Soviet people which is going to be needed if they're going to make the kind of economic changes and so on which are required. Or alternatively you will have, as you had after a few years of Khruschev for instance, the public disappearance more and more of these elements, and more and more a new orthodoxy growing up. And obviously I hope for the former rather than the latter.

David If you are looking for political pluralism you're not going to find it but that obscures the development of a much greater exchange of views and a more open press. There has been criticism of privilege in the press and Gorbachev himself has pointed to contradictions in Soviet society, between for instance the forces and relations of production. There is now a younger generation of people in positions of power – some 97% of the delegates at the congress were born after the second world war – and this newer generation does desire a much more open politics. They've been influenced by the image of the West and what they think is happening there. These are the kind of people who are pushing for much more openness in the system. It is 'openness' that Gorbachev emphasises.

Monty mentioned this question of special privileges. What is the scale of inequalities in this area and to what extent will this problem be tackled over the next period?

David It is extremely difficult to measure inequality. Letters in *Pravda* in February have criticised privileges such as special dining rooms, shops, housing and transport. Such things make an enormous difference to people's lives in a 'shortage' economy. The kinds of privileges that exist and the kinds of things that the present leadership wishes to abolish are basically the development of the role of unearned income, bribery and corruption and unearned privileges going with rank and postition. The present policy will, I think, attempt to undermine unearned advantage and seek to replace it with earned income. This involves more goods in the shop windows and more money in people's pockets. What I see as Gorbachev's vision is a society geared to distribution 'according to one's work'. Minimum pay is also to rise. I would foresee the development of greater wage differentials and improvement all round, but a decline in the kind of administrative privileges referred to earlier. That is the objective.

Wlodek I agree with this, but again this is one of the issues on which there was a lack of any profound discussion at the congress, even of any signalling of the problem. Clearly an economic reform which is supposed to be radical must bring important changes in income distribution. If wages are linked as is suggested with enterprise performance, there will be unequeal pay for the same work, because it will depend also on the performance of the enterprise. It cannot be assumed that all enterprises will perform the same way. This question was never even raised. The fact must be faced that radical reform will not only have beneficial effects. There may be some side effects that need to be discussed.

Monty On the question of the salaries paid to political leaders, I would make two points. Firstly, so long as they claim to be entirely faithful followers of Lenin, and yet as one remembers Lenin insisted that leaders and state officials in socialist states should only receive the average worker's wage, it is difficult for them to speak of the actual salaries which they themselves get. It is interesting that at the press conference that Aliev gave he was specifically asked by a Spanish press correspondent, what is your salary as a member of the politbureau? He replied, 'I live well, but not better than a factory manager!' Even the Soviet journalists who were present there apparently couldn't suppress a wry smile at this statement. And he even actually answered the question. And that brings us to the second point. If you are going to have information and accountability, surely the minimal standards that you have, for example, in a bourgeois democracy where everybody knows how much a minister is paid because it's all laid down, should apply to the leadership of the Soviet Union. And they're still some way away from that.

What do you think the impact of these developments will be in Eastern Europe and the communist movement more widely?

Wlodek In Eastern Europe they will start to admit the slow down and stagnation. In some countries this will probably mean mild encouragement to a pragmatic improvement in the economic system. The Czechs, for example, might shift a little from their completely immovable position. As for the communist movement in general, I believe it may help those communist parties in the developed countries which felt very uncomfortable with this declining image of the Soviet Union. However, this depends not on proclamation, but on real progress achieved. Otherwise I don't think it will make much difference.

Monty I agree with Wlodek on Eastern Europe for the immediate future. As far as the international communist movement is concerned, especially in the developed capitalist countries, in general I think people have been impressed by the readiness of Gorbachev to engage in far-reaching criticism and apparent self-criticism of the developments which have been taking place in the USSR. This is seen as a courageous act and as something which is positive in setting right things which were wrong. It is of course presumably fairly embarrassing to those parties who defended everything that the Soviet Union did, but to parties like, for instance, the British, Italian, Japanese or Swedish which were making these criticisms, it only goes to confirm the kind of points which we were making previously and to show that the elements of sclerosis that worried us about the Soviet leadership are coming to an end. Now we would hope very much that the logic of the situation for reasons that I outlined earlier will push towards a democratisation, but even without that, the process of modernisation, even with technocratic characteristics, is preferable to the kind of bureaucratic inertia that one saw previously. In Gorbachev's report he made some remarks about the international communist movement that certainly parties like the British and the Italian would regard as being positive, namely he recognised that it is normal there should be diversity in the international communist movement. Finally with regard to the question of peace, where the practical steps taken by Gorbachev in the field of foreign policy, the proposals in relation to nuclear disarmanent by the end of the century, the moratorium and all the rest of it, which have given the Soviet Union the initiative, have been regarded by the communist movement as extremely positive. And indeed I think they are, both from the point of view of the overriding need for world peace, and also of course as a basic precondition for the realisation by the Soviet Union itself of the economic objectives that it has set itself. □

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NOVOSTI ANNOUNCEMENT

TURNING POINT IN SOVIET LIFE

Extracts from the speech by Mikhail Gorbachyov, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 27th Congress.

'The 27th Congress of the CPSU has gathered at an abrupt turning point in the life of the country and the contemporary world as a whole', Mikhail Gorbachyov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee said, delivering the political report of the CPSU Central Committee at the party's congress. He pointed out that documents to be discussed at the present congress would speak of 'what the Soviet Union will be like as it enters the 21st century, of the image of socialism and its positions in the international arena, of the future of humanity.

'The path travelled by the country, its economic, social and cultural achievements, convincingly confirm the vitality of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and socialism's tremendous potential as embodied in the progress of Soviet society. We can be legitimately proud of everything that has been achieved in these years . . .', Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

While duly commending the achievements, he continued, the leadership of the CPSU considers it to be its duty to tell the party and the people honestly and frankly about the deficiencies in our political and practical activities, the unfavourable tendencies in the economy and the social and moral sphere, and about the reasons for them.

Noting that today's priority task is to overcome the negative factors in society's socio-economic development as rapidly as possible, Mikhail Gorbachyov said that the situation came to a turning point not only in internal but also in external affairs. The modern world is complicated, diverse and dynamic, and shot through with contending tendencies and contradictions. It is a world of the most intricate alternatives, anxieties and hopes.

Noting that the progress of the present day is rightly identified with socialism, the General Secretary characterised world socialism as a 'powerful international entity. It accounts for more than one-third of humanity, for dozens of countries and peoples opening up in every way the intellectual and moral wealth of man and society.'

'Social progress is expressed in the development of the international communist and working-class movement and in the growth of the new massive democratic movement of our time, including the anti-war and anti-nuclear movement,' Mikhail Gorbachyov continued. 'It is apparent, too, in the stratification of the political forces of the capitalist world, notably the USA, the metropolitan centre of imperialism. Here, progressive tendencies are forcing their way forward through a system of monopolistic totalitarianism, exposed to the continuous pressure of organised reactionary forces. . . .'

Stressing that the progress of humanity is directly connected with the scientific and technological progress, Mikhail Gorbachyov pointed out that the facets and consequences of the scientific and technological revolution varied in the different socio-political systems. 'The capitalism of the 1980s, the capitalism of the age of electronics and computer science, computers and robots, is leaving more millions of people, including young and educated people, without jobs', the report says.

The General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee described in detail the principal contradictions of the contemporary world, including the internal contradictions of the capitalist society. He described as the most important ones the contradictions connected with the relations between the states belonging to two systems.

While capitalism regarded the birth of socialism as an 'error' of history which must be 'rectified' at any cost, by any means, socialism, as distinct from capitalism, has never, of its own free will, related its future to any military solution of international problems, the Soviet leader pointed out. However, the ruling circles of the imperialist countries circulate today the myth of a Soviet or communist 'threat' for the purpose of justifying the arms race and the imperialist countries' own aggressiveness.

Although it is becoming increasingly clear that the path of war can yield no sensible solutions, either international or domestic, it is not easy at all, in the current circumstances, to predict the future of the relations between the socialist and the capitalist countries, the USSR and the USA. The decisive factors here will be the correlation of forces on the world scene, the growth and activity of the peace potential, and its capability of effectively repulsing the threat of nuclear war. Much will depend, too, on the degree of realism that Western ruling circles will show in assessing the situation. 'With nuclear war being totally unacceptable, peaceful co-existence rather than confrontation of the systems should be the rule in the inter-state relations', Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

Speaking about the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism, the General Secretary stressed that anti-communism and anti-Sovietism constituted its dangerous aspect. 'This concerns not only external policy. In the modern-day system of imperialism it is also a most important area of internal policy, a means of pressure on all the advanced and progressive elements that live and fight in the capitalist countries, in the non-socialist part of the world', Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

The political report of the CPSU Central Committee identified global-scale contradictions affecting the very foundations of the existence of civilisation, as those of pollution of the environment, the air and oceans, and the exhaustion of natural resources. 'The global problems, affecting all humanity, cannot be resolved by one state or a group of states', Mikhail Gorbachyov stressed. 'This calls for co-operation on a worldwide scale, for close and constructive joint action by the majority of countries.'

The speaker pointed out that the destinies of peace and social progress were now linked more closely than ever before with the dynamic character of the socialist world system's economic and political development. He spoke in detail about the deepening and expansion of co-operation between the socialist countries.

The report stresses that the CPSU is an inalienable component of the international communist movement and points out that the Soviet public is prepared to go on promoting links with non-communist movements and organisations, including religious organisations militating against war.

This is also the angle from which the CPSU regards its relations with the social democratic movement. 'It is a fact that the ideological differences between the Communists and the social democrats are deep, and that their achievements and experience are dissimilar and non-equivalent. However, an unbiased look at the standpoints and views of each other is unquestionably useful to both the Communists and the social democrats, useful in the first place for furthering the struggle for peace and international security.'

Mikhail Gorbachyov proposed a meeting between the leaders of the countries which are permanent members of the security council to discuss what could and should be done to strengthen peace. He also proposed the convocation of a world congress on problems of economic security at which it would be possible to discuss in a package everything that encumbers world economic relations.

The section of the report devoted to the Communist party, which has a membership of 19 million people, dealt with the results of the discussion of the new edition of the party programme and of the amendments to the party rules.

'First of all, the conclusions and provisions of the CPSU programme and rules have met with widespread approval. The Communists and Soviet people support the party's policy of accelerating the country's socio-economic development and its programme's clear orientation towards the communist perspective and the strengthening of world peace', the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachyov, said in conclusion.

THE 27th CONGRESS C.P.S.U.

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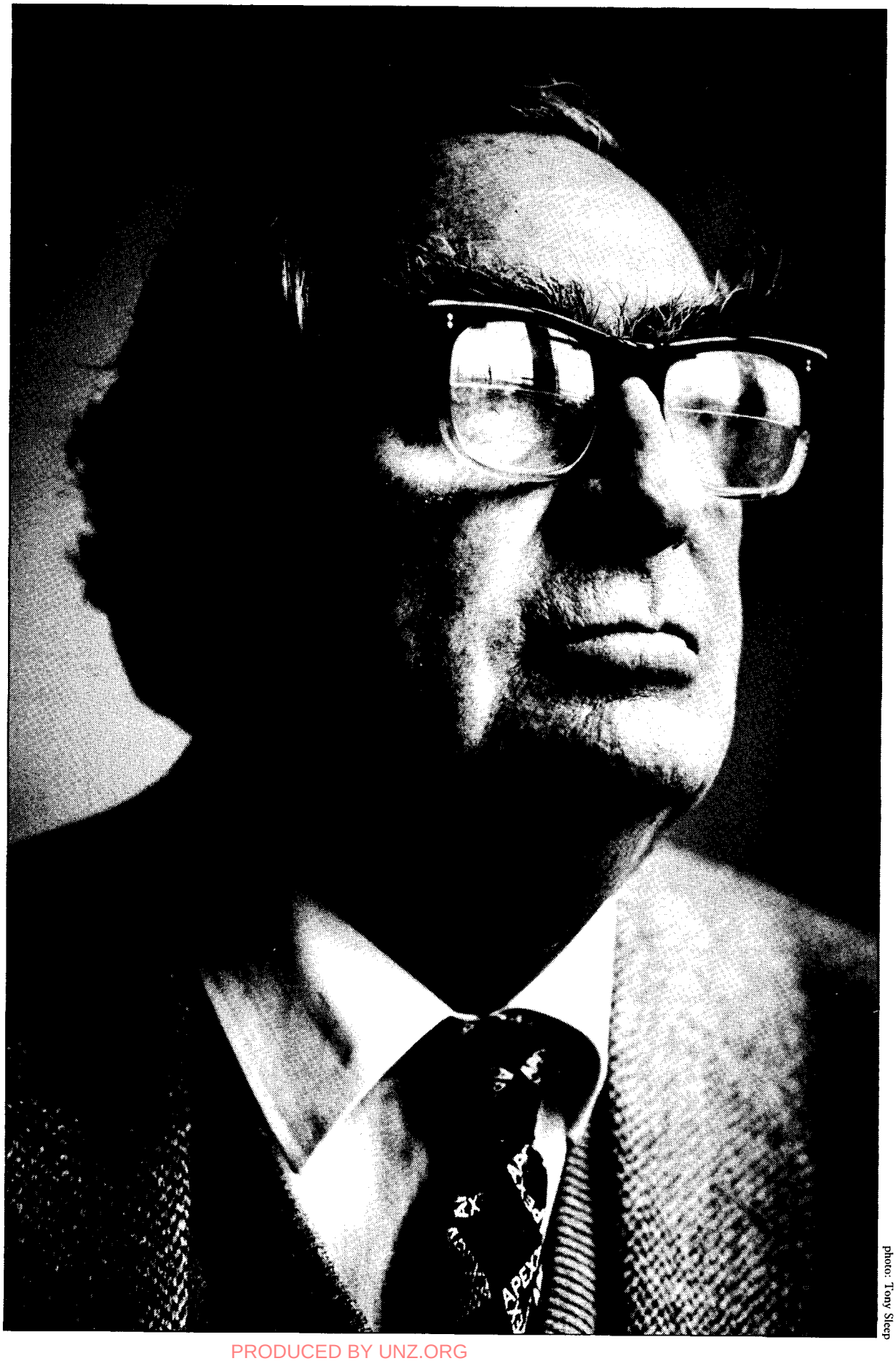

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Denis Healey, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, is interviewed by Jonathan Steele.

The slight improvement in US/Soviet relations at the Geneva Summit in November now seems to be evaporating fast. Which side now must take the major blame?

The main responsibility lies with the Americans. President Reagan made it clear he thought that it was possible to reach an agreement on intermediate range missiles following the summit, at least an interim agreement which would involve some sort of freeze. And the Russian proposal in this area has been much more far-reaching than anybody in the West ever expected. It involves putting NATO in a more favourable position as regards intermediate range missiles than it's been in since the early 60s. But the Americans seem reluctant to accept this. On the other hand, I think the failure to make progress on the confidence-building measures in the Stockholm negotiations and the mutual and balanced force reductions in Vienna is mainly because the Russians haven't so far followed through in the formal arms negotiations on Mr Gorbachev's offer of much more far-reaching verification measures, including on-site inspections made in his speeches in January and at the party congress. But I've no doubt this is partly a problem of adjusting the lines of communication between the new leadership, which is changing almost day-by-day in Moscow, and the negotiators on the spot.

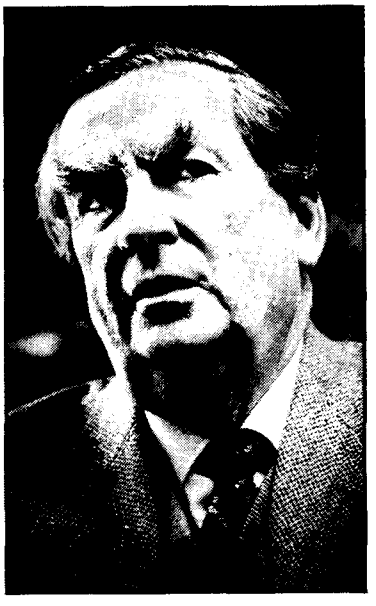
Do you think Mr Gorbachev really represents something new in the Soviet Union?

By far the most important thing which Gorbachev said in his speech in the congress, though little commented on in the Western press, was when he went out of his way to revise the doctrine of the two camps – the belief that the struggle between the capitalist and what they call the socialist world was a permanent feature of the world and would end in the victory of socialism by peaceful means, unless the capitalists chose to fight it. In his speech Gorbachev said that changes which have taken place in the world mean that the confrontation of opposites in effect must lead to a new synthesis, that we're now moving step by step, groping in the dark as it were, words that are rather uncharacteristic ones for a Soviet leader, towards an interdependent world, an integral world as he put it. Global problems cannot be solved by groups of states but only on a global basis. Now this is an extremely dramatic change in the Soviet position. And of course he's absolutely right. Many of us in the West have come to feel that the development of technology in the military and economic fields has produced a single world in which the central problems, both military and economic, are going to require co-operation between the two camps rather than continued confrontation and competition.

Do you think this shift is partly because the Russians have come to realise that they are, in a sense, excluded from the world system because of their economic weakness, and the fact that the big institutions like the IMF and World Bank are out of their control. Are they trying to find a new way of getting back into things?

One of the Soviet intellectual leaders is reported to have said in the last 12 months that if Russia doesn't watch out, it'll end the century still one of the world's two superpowers from the military point of view, but not even a great power by any other standard. I think Gorbachev's speeches have all been warning his people of this fact. But the other important thing is that the Russians have come to realise, as any sensible person must, that the arms race in itself now has become a major threat to world peace, that it is moving into areas which will be very destabilising of the so-called balance, which has existed between the superpowers for the last 40 years. And that dramatic steps must be taken to stop the arms race and to prevent it from going into space.

The other fact which it is important to recognise is that, in 1945, when the United Nations was set up, the Soviet Union was not prepared to join most of its functional organisations. Similarly although the Marshall plan was open to participation by the communist countries, the Soviet Union refused to join and also prevented the Czech government from participating. It's a very different world today. A number of communist countries have joined the IMF and the World Bank. The Soviet government is deeply involved in the financial side of the international economy. Indeed the Soviet government, and the Hungarian government, have recently said they would like to make their currencies fully convertible, which means of course accepting the disciplines of Western markets. The Russians have also come to realise that many aspects of their economy are deeply dependent on the prosperity of the West. So on the economic as well as the military side, the countries in the Soviet bloc have come to realise that they belong to a global economy.



Neil Kinnock and I have been to Moscow, and in effect we've done a little negotiation ourselves about Polaris with Mr Chernenko

I wonder what the policy consequences are of that change for Britain and Western Europe? We're always told that NATO exists because of the Soviet threat. You yourself have said repeatedly that there never has been a real possibility of an all-out invasion of Western Europe since 1945, so what is the Soviet threat?

I've said that there's no evidence that the Russians have ever planned an attack on Western Europe from a standing start in the central front, which is one of the scenarios which NATO worries about, but I've always believed that there was a risk of fighting developing between the Warsaw Pact and NATO

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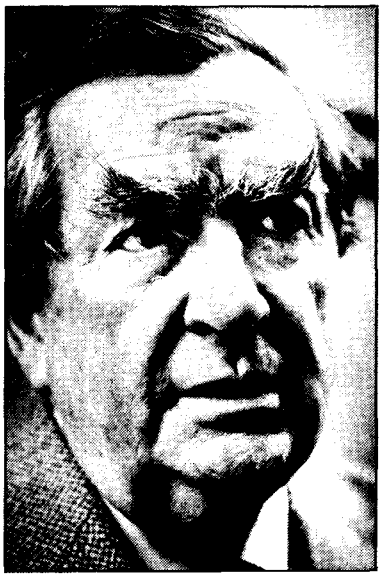
countries as a result of an explosion in Eastern Europe, like East Berlin in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and of course the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army and other forces in 1968. The possibility of conflicts spreading West from some such explosions is always there; it was one of the factors which led the Russians to be extremely cautious in their handling of the Polish situation in 1981. The other area from which fighting between the Soviet Union and the West could develop is Third World conflicts, which are not controlled by either of the superpowers but which are thought by one or both of them to involve their vital interests. The most obvious case of course is the Middle East/Mediterranean area where the Soviet involvement with Syria is very deep. There are Soviet missiles, some say staffed by Soviet forces in Syria. I know that there was deep worry in Moscow as well as Washington a couple of years ago, when it looked as if the Gulf war might lead to an American intervention to which the Russians would respond, and then there's no saying how fast a fire would spread.

the *Ostpolitik* removed one of the major obstacles from other European countries establishing better relations with Eastern Europe



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What we do know from studying Soviet writing about war in Europe is that while they have no intention of starting a war if they can help it, if war does start, they've every intention of winning it very fast, and winning it so fast that the West wouldn't have time to decide to use its nuclear weapons. And this is a contingency which it's only prudent to guard against, because we've learned from Afghanistan that if the Soviet government thinks it can solve a problem by military force without great risk to itself, it may take that as the easier option.

And what about Eastern Europe? Will the new Soviet approach you have described see greater latitude there?

I think they've accepted divergence as a necessary feature of the socialist camp. As I understand it, they half-legitimised Eurocommunism at their recent congress and they've accepted that different countries in Eastern Europe may approach their goals by different methods. East Germany and Hungary, which are the two most successful economies in Eastern Europe have very different systems.

On the other hand, we've had the experience of Solidarity in Poland and the way that was squashed. Do you really see this change as having policy consequences for Eastern Europeans in the sense that there will be a greater independence for governments there?

I found when I was recently in Budapest and East Berlin that this question is one of major concern, as you'd expect, to the local political leaders. The Russians are clearly determined not only to maintain the Warsaw Pact, but also to give it more meaning through greater consultation. And the fact remains that the Warsaw Pact's function is as much to maintain the solidarity of the East European buffer zone as to deal with a potential threat from NATO. What is certainly happening is that the Eastern European countries are exploring new techniques to improve their economies. My impression is they believe they will get a good deal of latitude in this field on condition they don't in any way challenge Soviet leadership of the Warsaw Pact, and least of all threaten to leave the Warsaw Pact, which was probably the fear which led the Russians finally to intervene in Czechoslovakia. Certainly it was the major factor in the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956.

I also feel that the East European governments want to develop their own bilateral relationships with West European governments. Don't forget that the German Democratic Republic has much closer economic relations with West Germany than with any country in the Soviet bloc. Hungary has much better political relations with Austria than it has with Rumania. The ruling circles in Eastern Europe are as anxious to develop relations with West European countries as many West European countries, notably the Germans, are with Eastern Europe. One good thing which the Conservative government has done in Britain, and Mrs Thatcher personally, has been to encourage this kind of bilateral relationship. As you know, she visited Hungary, the first British prime minister to visit any East European country since the war.

Is there not a paradox though that in the period when the Labour government was in office in the mid 60s and so on, Britain actually had much worse relations with the Soviet Union than either the French or the West Germans? We always seem to be the last people to get there.

The late-60s, when I was Defence Secretary, was a very difficult period because we had the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

But in spite of that, you had Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik *starting in 1969...*

That was the late 60s. Labour left power in 1970. Moreover the *Ostpolitik* removed one of the major obstacles for other European countries establishing better relations with Eastern Europe because under the Hallstein doctrine, which Willy Brandt got rid of, the allies of West Germany were not allowed any relations with East Germany whatever. It was Willy Brandt's courage and imagination in reversing that position which opened the door to better relations between West and East European countries.

I also think there was another element in it which it's worth mentioning. When Ernest Bevin became Britain's Foreign Secretary, I think he really believed that Left could speak to Left. But I think his contacts with Soviet diplomats like Molotov reminded him so poignantly of his battles with the British Communists in his own trade union, that in the end there was some truth in the old saying that he thought the Soviet Union was a breakaway from the Transport and General Workers

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Union! The Labour party attitude towards Eastern Europe was also inevitably influenced by the fact that the East European communists had forcibly destroyed the socialist parties in their countries, with whom we'd had very close links in the post-war years. And of course the rise of Solidarity, again, had much more sympathy on the Left in Britain than it did on the Right, and its suppression is still seen as a bigger obstacle to good relations between the Labour party and the present Polish government than it is to better relations between the Conservative government and the present Polish government. So this ideological factor played a rather negative role, I think.

But wouldn't the same ideological factors have worked in the case of the German SPD and the French Socialists?

The West Germans had a tremendous guilt feeling about the Poles which I think was dramatically symbolised by that superb gesture of Willy Brandt in kneeling in the Warsaw ghetto, one of the great images of 20th century politics. Moreover the essence of the *Ostpolitik* was improving relations with East Germany and reversing the Hallstein doctrine, and this struck a very fundamental chord. Remember you have an enormous refugee population in West Germany which has been growing continuously. Detente meant much more in practical terms for the West Germans than it did for anybody else. Now a factor in French relations with Eastern Europe was an attempt to rebuild, if you like, the prewar alliance against Germany. Their relations with the East Germans haven't been very good, but they have tried to develop the sort of relations they had before the war with East Germany's neighbours. Whereas Britain's tradition has always been to keep out of all continental entanglements. One of the problems in the prewar period was that we wanted a balance of power in Europe between France and Germany. An active policy in Europe has never been a very British thing unless we were forced into it. I regard that as a great mistake and, as you know, I believe we should have an active policy now.

Isn't it also to do with the relationship with the United States? In a sense the relationships with the Soviet Union and the United States are two sides of the same coin. The British Labour party, compared again with the SPD and the French Socialists, has always been much more atlanticist, much more persuaded that somehow it can influence Washington by quiet diplomacy...

This is true.

But has that really worked? I mean looking back on the history of your time as Defence Secretary and so on, do you really think that Britain has ever changed US policy?

I know we have, on issues which you may not regard as very important, but then I don't expect to change fundamental American policy because that's determined by American views of American interests. But we did shift American policy on a number of strategic issues. For example during the 60s, when I was Defence Secretary I got the nuclear planning group set up in order to be able to influence American nuclear strategy. And we did to a large extent. The strategy adopted by NATO in 1966 was a compromise between the American and European positions in which we acted really as the broker between the two sides. We set up a Euro group inside NATO which worked quite well when the British government was interested. Unfortunately they lost interest after Labour left power in 1970.

The Americans have a very active presence and policy in every single part of the world and if we broke with them, we would lose any possibility of influencing them. They would go in for global unilateralism, and the world would be a more dangerous place. I criticise the Thatcher government, and have repeatedly criticised it, for giving in to the Americans on many issues when it's been against Britain's interest to do so. One of the things that troubles me most at this moment is that we are not, as we should be, a member of the group of three countries involved in negotiating a comprehensive test ban treaty. We haven't acceded to the demand of all the members of the non-proliferation treaty to get those negotiations going again. We've been totally silent on the matter. Of course the real obstacle is the American determination under the Reagan administration to contine testing whatever happens.

Let's turn now to British nuclear weapons. Many people would say one of the reasons why Labour was defeated in the last general election was the confusion in public over what the policy was on Polaris.

The reason we were defeated, in so far as defence played a role, is that people believed we were in favour of unilaterally disarming ourselves. It wasn't the confusion, it was the unilateralism that was the damaging thing. And all the opinion polls have shown that.

But that was the party policy at the time.

No, the party policy at the time was to negotiate Polaris away. That was the policy on which we fought the election.

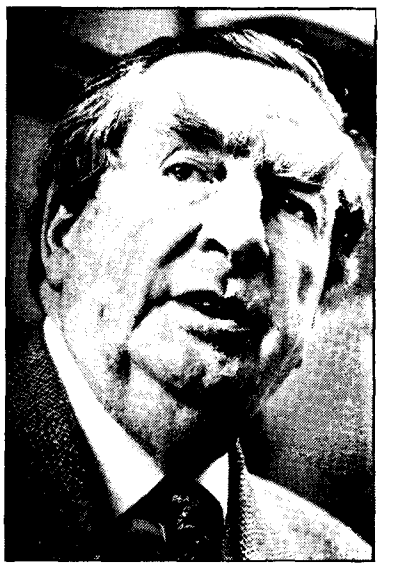

photo: Tony Sleep

when Ernest Bevin became Britain's Foreign Secretary . . . he believed that the Left could speak to the Left

But if you put it into the negotiations, the assumption is that if negotiations fail, you keep Polaris.

The misfortune was that agreement wasn't reached inside the party at that time on what would happen if negotiations failed, and different things were said about what would happen according to people's underlying views and this was damaging to the party. But I remember vividly the very first election meeting I went to. It was at Allerton Bywater Colliery just outside Leeds,

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which incidentally stayed loyal right through the miners' strike without any defection whatever. I was torn to shreds in the miners' canteen by miners saying to me, 'we're never going to vote for a party which is in favour of unilaterally disarming Britain'.

Well, unilateral nuclear disarmament of Britian is the policy of the party now.

It's in favour of a non-nuclear defence strategy for NATO, in favour of sending the Cruise missiles home, of not going ahead with Trident, and of, this is the big question, do we unilaterally get rid of Polaris whatever happens, or do we accept the Soviet proposal to negotiate about its future in the second stage of the arms negotiations? And this will have to be resolved before the election.

With respect, I thought the party policy said that a Labour government would decommission...

Yes, but as I say a lot has happened since then. We've had the disarmament talks between the Soviet and American governments in which the Polaris system has figured very largely. Neil Kinnock and I have been to Moscow, and in effect we've done a little negotiation ourselves about Polaris with Mr Chernenko, who agreed that they would get rid of the equivalent medium range missiles. Since then Mr Gorbachev has put Polaris into the strategic list and plans to reach an agreement on medium range missiles which leaves Polaris untouched, providing we don't build it up, I think that is the phrase used. And this produces a situation which we can't ignore and which I'm sure we will address in a satisfactory way before the election comes.

And do you think that is better than what you personally negotiated with Chernenko?

That's out of date in any case now, because Chernenko was talking about reducing the number of SS20s by the number of Polaris missiles. Now the Russians are saying they'll get rid of the SS20s in the European theatre entirely if the Americans get rid of Cruise and Pershing. We want to get rid of Cruise anyway. And I know the German SPD wants to get rid of Pershing.

Well, coming on to Cruise, the Labour party's most recent defence statement says, and I'm quoting, 'The party is committed to the unconditional removal of all US nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and British waters. Suppose the Americans simply say we don't want to remove Cruise missiles from Britain?

They can't say that. We're getting rid of them. We've said that. We've made that absolutely clear. Even when we were in office we never agreed to have them, contrary to some of the things that have been said. We made it clear we opposed the putting of them here, I spoke in the debate myself, and that we would send them back as soon as we won the election and that we shall do. One of the things I liked very much about the victory of the Spanish prime minister in his referendum is that it was on the basis that Spain was free to choose what bits of NATO she wanted to join in and what bits she didn't. It was NATO *a la carte* to quote Lord Carrington's own phrase. They have said they are not going to have nuclear weapons there, they're not going to be in NATO's integrated military structure, which is not something we want to get out of, and they also want to cut the number of American forces in Spain, and they will.

What about the other US nuclear weapons based in Britain, which again the party is committed to unconditionally removing. How do you define what a nuclear base is?

This is something we haven't yet addressed ourselves too adequately, in my personal opinion.

Shouldn't you be doing that in opposition?

We are beginning to do that, yes. But we shall do it on our own and not in public – least of all in *Marxism Today!*

Do you expect to produce some kind of list for the electorate to see before the election?

No, I shouldn't think we'll do that, we'd be crazy to get down to that degree of detail in a general election. The plain fact is that in so far as defence played a role in the last election, it was one which was very negative for the Labour party because people thought we wanted to see Britain undefended, not unilateral nuclear disarmament.

You have long been considered to be one of the most pro-American members of the party, but recently you've been criticising them on many issues, from Star Wars to Central America.

You must draw a distinction between the Americans and the Reagan administration. I've always criticised American policy when I've disagreed with it. Just as I've criticised British policy. I was violently anti-Suez and pro-American in 1956, just as I was violently anti-Soviet on the invasion of Hungary which took place at the same time. But I disagree fundamentally with the Reagan administration's approach to Third World problems, notably of course Southern Africa, the Middle East and Central America, and I disagree very strongly with this administration's view of how to negotiate with the Soviet Union. But don't forget that my criticism of Star Wars has been echoed by the last three American presidents and the last six American defence secretaries. I'm not anti-American. I'm against the Reagan administration's policies.

Your criticism of American policy towards Nicaragua, in a statement I read recently, was that aiding the Contras was counter-productive, it wouldn't work, it would impede the forces which wanted to make Nicaragua a more pluralistic society. Isn't that a rather pragmatic argument?

I wouldn't accept that as a description of my position. I've used many arguments against America's present policy in Nicaragua. The most fundamental one is that it's a direct violation of the United Nations charter. But I also attack it because Central America is undergoing a social and political revolution against a century of colonial influence and local landowning or military dictatorships, and they must be allowed to settle down. I also believe, and argue this with Americans, that the policy is making America hated throughout Central America. America's policies in Nicaragua are opposed by every single one of the Central American governments, even that of El Salvador.

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Many of your allies, and friends over a long period of years, have left the party and joined the SDP. Why have you stayed behind?

First of all, right-wing splinter groups from left-wing parties always weaken the party they leave without creating anything of value themselves, and this has proved to be the case with the SDP. Secondly, I was convinced that the Labour party would emerge from the very black period during which it was fighting itself rather than fighting the Conservatives. It's taken us longer to emerge because those people left the Labour Party, but we have emerged and we shall win the next election in consequence.

If there was a hung parliament after the next election, would you be arguing in favour of a coalition with the Alliance?

Well I don't want to enter into these domestic disputes inside the British Communist party, that would really be a great mistake.

Labour held office for 11 years between 1964 and 1979, and you were a prominent member of these governments. We've ended up with the most right-wing government since the war and with Labour fighting to survive as the main opposition party. What went wrong?

Very simple. I think what went wrong in the Callaghan government was that all of us were a little bit too infected by *hubris*. We'd had a very successful four years following the first year of getting unemployment and inflation falling simultaneously. In 1978 there was a 7½% increase in real personal disposable income. And a great mistake was to believe that the unions would accept a 5% pay limit although it was quite clear in retrospect there was no chance of that happening. If we'd settled for single figures, we wouldn't have had the winter of discontent, we'd have had a much better inflation outcome and we'd still be in power. That was the major reason we lost. The second time, of course, it was the madness into which the party fell following that defeat, when we had the continous in-fighting on irrelevant issues, or issues which were not as important as the issues we should have been fighting on against the Conservatives, which meant that the British people including the bulk of workers did not feel that we were fit to be a government.

What would you say your own objectives are? Would you call yourself a socialist? What do you mean by socialism?

Socialism to me is establishing social control of power in society, and where that differs from liberalism for example which aims at a similar situation in some respects, is we think you can only establish control over power by changing the structure and distribution of power, notably economic power. In the international field, I think you have to try and build some social tissue between various parts of the world. I like an untidy proliferation of overlapping organisations, as I hope I've demonstrated in my approach to European problems. But trying to create a sense of common interest does involve getting people actually to work together on common problems. It can't be created by law, that's why I disagree with the liberal approach becuase it's essentially a lawyer's approach. Nor can it be done by engineering, which is why I disagree with the marxist approach. The gardener's approach is the one that makes sense, in which you respect the nature of the soil, you're prepared for the climate to be worse or better than you expected, and you sow the right seeds in the right bits of soil.

If the Labour party comes back to power, with an overall majority, and it lasts its course for five years, what's the best case scenario for how it could really change Britain?

The most important single thing will be to improve our relative economic performance. Otherwise we'll be slipping back into the Soviet situation, except in our case we won't be a superpower militarily, though we may have one or two cultural interests to peddle. When I started in politics, I thought that your duty as a reformer was to produce heaven on earth the week after the election. Or at worst a fortnight. Now it's quite a reasonable objective to prevent hell on earth. And, belonging to a generation which was born in the first world war, had to endure the second world war and is living under the cloud of a third, I think if we can make a major contribution to peace, we shall deserve our place in the history books. □

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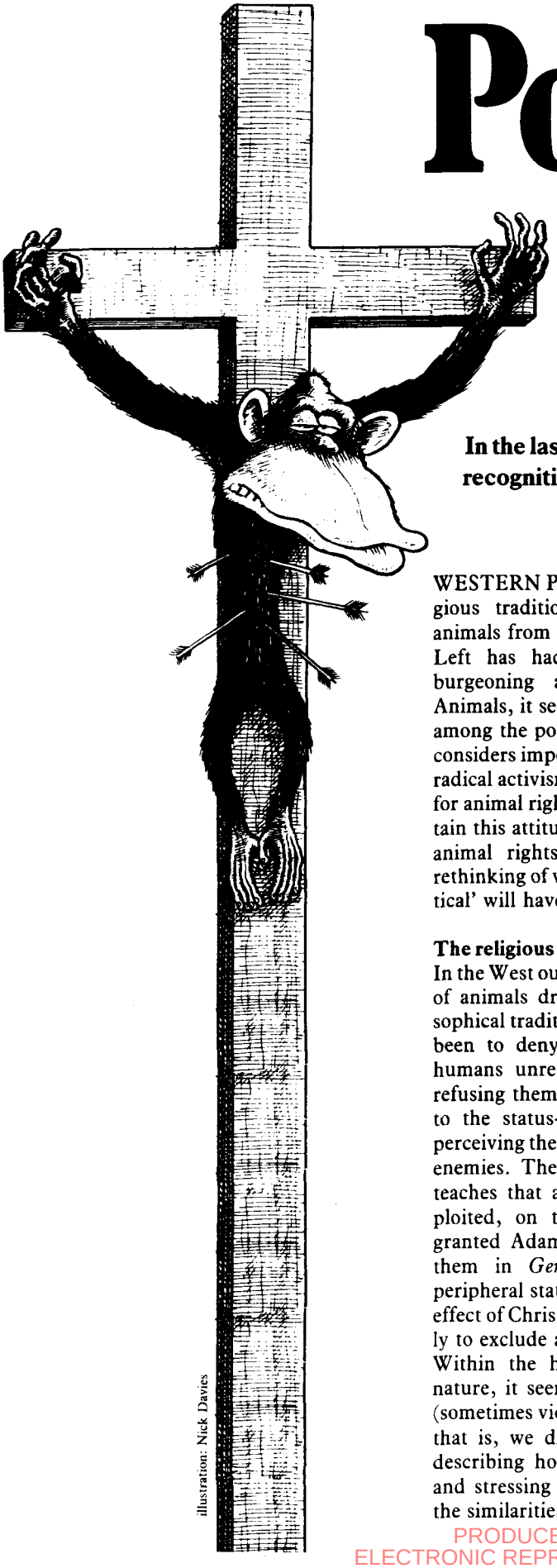

illustration: Nick Davies

Political Animals

Sara Mills and Patrick Williams

In the last few years the animal rights movement has grown out of all recognition. It's now an important political force that challenges our definition of the political.

WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL and religious traditions have always excluded animals from their considerations. So the Left has had little to say about the burgeoning animal rights movement. Animals, it seems, have not found a place among the political subjects that the Left considers important. But a combination of radical activism and wide popular support for animal rights make it difficult to maintain this attitude. The problem is that for animal rights to be taken seriously a rethinking of what we understand by 'political' will have to occur.

The religious background

In the West our conceptions of the position of animals draw on religious and philosophical traditions whose effect has always been to deny status to animals: giving humans unrestricted power over them; refusing them any rights; confining them to the status-less realm of nature; and perceiving them as constant competitors or enemies. The Judaeo-Christian tradition teaches that animals are there to be exploited, on the basis of God's having granted Adam and Eve 'dominion' over them in *Genesis*, and despite certain peripheral statements to the contrary, the effect of Christian teaching has been mainly to exclude animals from consideration. Within the humanist tradition, human nature, it seems, can only be defined in (sometimes violent) opposition to animals; that is, we discover *our* nature through describing how we differ from animals, and stressing the differences rather than the similarities (ie, we are rational, social, compassionate etc). We describe ourselves as constituting the norm and then define animals, due to their lack of language and hence thought, as a deviation from that norm. We can picture ourselves more easily as rational beings if we can compare ourselves to unthinking beasts. Elements of this attitude to animals are present even in Marx, eg, in *Capital Vol I*, where nature is little more than brute matter to be dominated by the combination of will and imaginative labour which makes humans what they are, and animals, especially domestic ones, can be regarded as mere 'instruments of labour, along with specially prepared stones, wood, bones and shells.'

> animals, it seems, have not found a place among the political subjects of the Left

A further philosophical problem falsely represents animals as being in a position of competition or conflict with people, in relation to limited resources – the 'lifeboat theory' of conflicting needs discussed by moral philosophers. In this model, it is assumed that any attention we give to animals will be at the expense of humans. One example often cited is the case of the Third World farmer protecting his crops against locusts. Here, animals and humans are clearly in direct competition, and humans must therefore come first. However, especially in the West, these situations of direct life-or-death competition are ex-

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tremely rare. Our relationship with animals and the natural world is one of interdependence rather than competition. Furthermore, whilst it is obvious that we are going to care more for those we consider most similar to ourselves, this does not in any way preclude our also giving help to others.

Redefining nature

The redefinition of the nature and status of animals has been ludicrously long overdue. Humans have never stopped thinking about themselves, and since the Renaissance, when increasing emphasis was laid on the importance of the individual, views of the universe have tended to become ever more human-centred. However, there can be few areas of life where our behaviour is governed by such outmoded concepts based on obsolete information as it is in relation to animals. For instance, the notion of the species barrier (where it is considered that there is a clear division between other species and ourselves which is much greater than any division between other species) is still widely accepted and yet it was formulated centuries ago. The ignorance of the period was partly wilful ie, evidence about the intelligence, sensitivity etc, of ordinary animals was ignored, but more importantly nothing was known about the most highly developed non-human species: whales and dolphins were assumed to be fish; the great apes were unknown.

More adequate information has, however, done little to modify the underlying categories. Knowledge that animals are closer to us than we have previously cared to admit has not resulted in our treating them any better. It is typical of the intellectual dishonesty of those who exploit animals that they are forced simultaneously to maintain two contradictory positions: the first is that animals *are* like us, in order that the results of experiments on them may be generalised to humans. The second argument states that animals are *not* like humans, especially in terms of their ability to feel pain, and therefore no-one need worry about the cruelty and suffering inflicted (this explains why no anaesthetic is given to rabbits when chemicals are dropped into their eyes for the Draize test).

The redrawing of boundaries within philosophy and religion has repercussions elsewhere – in this case, politics, where the inclusion of the animal rights issue challenges not only our treatment of animals but also the way in which we conceive of the political sphere in general. One result of the religious and philosophical attitudes we have mentioned is that the question of the treatment of animals has never been seen as falling within the political – animals were obviously not to be regarded as constituent members of the state – and therefore never constituted a 'proper' question meriting serious consideration. This meant, in essence, that it was never considered necessary or worthwhile legislating about animals, and abuse in all its forms could continue unhindered. Indeed, it was so clearly not a serious matter that when the first attempt was made in parliament to legislate for the general protection of animals, hysterical laughter from all sides of the House drowned out the speaker. Parliament has not made a great deal of visible progress in terms of the status they are prepared to grant animals, witness Roy Hattersley trying to ascribe Labour's 1983 electoral debacle to the fact that they had concentrated on 'peripheral' issues, which inevitably included animals. So little have animals been considered a political issue that legislation on laboratory animals has not been amended since 1876.

> knowing that animals are closer to us than we have previously cared to admit has not resulted in our treating them any better

A counterpart to the redefinition of the human and the animal has been a certain redefining of the political. From a view of politics as concerned with the administration of people en masse, we have moved to the opposite extreme with 'the personal is political'. Even if it is, however, that retains the idea of politics as addressing itself exclusively to human beings. A necessary way forward is provided by Gramsci with the assertion that the natural is political – or to be more precise, that human relations with the natural world have to be seen as forming part of the political. This is an important step for various reasons. Firstly, because human relations with the natural world are currently indefensibly imperialistic – one species decides the destinies of all the others – and believes that it is right to do so, simply because it happens to possess the requisite power. Secondly, it is a vital stage in the acquisition of status by animals: not as articles of human property, not even, as in Gramsci, through the different forms of their relation with people, but rather as creatures who deserve it in their own right.

Capitalism v animal rights

In any discussion of animal rights it is essential to understand the central importance of connections between capitalism and animal abuse. This is not to suggest that other forms of sociey do not involve animal abuse, or that the removal of capitalism would automatically end it, merely that no social formation has been so deeply implicated in the maintenance and proliferation of the mistreatment of animals as capitalism. It is no coincidence that, in general, the relation of people in the West to the rest of the natural world has never seemed so unproblematic, so commonsensically self-evident as it has under capitalism – precisely because its problematic nature has been subject to the greatest degree of ideological naturalising, in the face of a variety of challenges.

The most obvious and widespread of the connections is established via the profit motive. Humankind's relation with animals has been one of ever-increasing exploitation, but not until the advent of capitalism was there the need, nor the means, for it to take place on such a scale. The principal areas of this exploitation now are: factory farming; commodity testing on animals (cosmetics, household products, fertilisers, pesticides); fur-farming; medical experiments (including drugs and psychological tests); warfare experiments (radiation, gas, injuries from bullets and bombs).

Under capitalism, animals are increasingly viewed as objects and commodities to be produced and sold, or as machines for the production of these commodities: 'The modern layer is, after all, only a very efficient converting machine, changing the raw material (feeding stuffs) into the finished product (the egg) less, of course, maintenance requirements.[1] This process culminates in the factory farm, unalloyed greed in material form.

> humans have never stopped thinking about themselves

Even on its own terms, however, factory farming is not a great success: it is capital and energy intensive requiring enormous subsidies of the sort which agribusiness seems to obtain with remarkable ease. Yet in spite of the increasing barbarity of its processes – including mutiliating or im-

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mobilising animals in an attempt to overcome conditions caused by the stressful nature of the environment – and the increasing use of dyes, hormones, antibiotics and other additives,[2] both the quality and the quantity of its products are declining, and some of the smaller farmers are being *forced* (rather than choosing) to go back to less intensive methods.

Pursuit of profit results in some of the very worst forms of animal abuse, not only in factory farming, but also in the millions of utterly pointless experiments carried out eg, to test cosmetics where harmless plant extracts or vegetable oils could be used; or those carried out on alcohol and tobacco, and on drugs where multinational pharmaceutical companies continue to produce drugs which merely replicate a dozen others already on the market (eg, painkillers and tranquilisers).

It is in the use of animals for medical experiments that many people find most difficult to object to. Here, perhaps vested interest rather than mere financial gain is the determining factor. But even here – in spite of the Research Defence Society's campaign of emotive disinformation – alternatives to the use of animals are already available and more are being developed by independent bodies such as the Dr Hadwen Trust, the Lord Dowding Trust, and the Humane Research Trust, in the face of a depressing lack of interest or funding by government or industry. Among the already available alternatives are the use of cell and tissue culture, and computer simulation, which replace animals in a wide variety of experiments, not only those like Draize or LD50[3] but also in research into arthritis and cancer. The fact that, in the past, progress has made and cures have been found using animals in experiments when alternatives had not been developed (often because no attempt had been made to look for any) is no justification for pretending that only the continued use of animals will guarantee further scientific advance.

> the movement can also probably lay claim to a greater variety of tactics and approaches than any other

A growing movement

But, it is the sheer presence of the animal rights movement today that makes it a

force to reckon with. Its constituency, the size of its membership and the degree of commitment manifested from its supporters raise pressing questions about our long-held assumptions about the nature of political action.

Although Britain has had animal welfare organisations for a century-and-a-half, the rapid growth and radicalisation of the movement in recent years has been a direct response to the proliferation of forms and the quantity of animal abuse, not only in factory farming and experiments, but also in the violence done to domestic animals, as RSPCA reports show. This, in turn, has led to the formation of a large number of groups, at both national and local level, which, despite the diversity of their concerns, are united in the aim of reducing the suffering of animals at the hands of humans and of bringing animal rights both to public attention and onto the political agenda.

The movement can be broadly divided into three areas (though many people belong to or support more than one of the groups within them): The traditional organisations like the RSPCA, the PDSA and the Cats' Protection League, which are often termed animal welfare groups; the originally more middle-of-the-road organisations like the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV), which have become more radical; and the more 'militant' organisations like the Animal Liberation Front and the Animal Rights Militia which have been established more recently by those who feel that trying to change legislation is not an effective way of saving animals in the short-term.

The first grouping, the animal welfare associations, are in the main conservative, and have stressed the need to change the status of animals only through legislation. Concerned mainly with the welfare of domestic animals (the RSPCA also deals with farm and wild animals), these groups ensure that those who mistreat animals are prosecuted, and that animals are given adequate medical treatment. But even within these associations, there has been a certain amount of radicalisation due to the influx of younger members unhappy with their entrenched conservatism (this change can clearly be seen in the recent publication of leaflets by the RSPCA which strongly condemn fox hunting and fur-trapping). There have been occasional attempts to suggest that there is an opposition between animal rights campaigners and animal welfarists, with organisations like the RSPCA trying to retain respectability by describing this split as greater than it in fact is. However, it should be remembered that most animal rights campaigners are so because they care about animal welfare.

The second grouping, which consists of organisations such as BUAV and the Vegetarian Society, are those which, like the RSPCA, have been in existence for some time, but which, especially in the case of BUAV, have become more radical in recent years because of a *massive* influx of younger people. BUAV at first believed that the reduction and eventual abolition of the use of animals in experiments could only be achieved by lobbying parliament and holding demonstrations. But although their campaigning methods have become more forceful, they still maintain that significant change in animal conditions can only be achieved through legislation, and they do not actively encourage the use of violence.

Although the changes in the composition and outlook of the Vegetarian Society have followed rather than led the growth in numbers of people turning to vegetarianism, the society does play an important role, catering for all age groups, and providing information not only about vegetarianism, but also about the wider implications, such as farm animal abuse (their largest annual demonstration is against the Smithfield Livestock Show) and the links between meat production and starvation in the Third World (which results in absurdities such as Britain buying £1m worth of best quality grain from Ethiopia in 1984 to be used for animal feed).

The third grouping consists of the more militant organisations like the Animal Liberation Front and the Animal Rights Militia, and even within this grouping there is considerable divergence of tactics. There is a strong anarchist element in the ALF. They believe in direct action, raiding laboratories, breeding establishments and factory farms, to liberate animals and to draw public attention to the conditions of animals and the more unsavoury aspects of experimentation, like pet stealing. They also believe in attacks on butchers' shops

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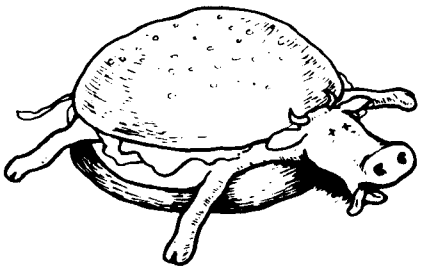
and shops selling fur. The ALF and groups associated with them such as Central Animal Liberation League, have stated that, whilst they believe in damaging property, they do not believe in hurting people, except in necessary self-defence. Groups like Animal Rights Militia, however, who claimed responsibility for the bombs which were planted at the homes of vivisectors recently, and who organised the Mars bars poisoning scare, believe that it is through such actions, which entail massive publicity, that the position of animals will be improved.

A new politics

One might ask why the animal rights movement has such an appeal and how it is able to draw on the broad constituency it does. More than any other contemporary movement, its membership crosses boundaries of age, class and politics. (It is rare, for example, to find anywhere else women in twin set and pearls marching alongside punks and anarchists to lobby their MPs.) The precise extent of the support is not easy to determine, but there are, for instance, an estimated 3m vegetarians in Britain, and a recent mid-week lobby of MPs – not the sort of thing which brings supporters out in droves – attracted over a thousand people. Similarly, accounting for the nature of the appeal runs the risk of oversimplification, but one can suggest certain factors, namely, a concern for other living creatures; a concern for the environment; opposition to an inhuman and exploitative system; and a sort of solidarity of the oppressed and the marginalised. More importantly, because the movement embraces all these positions, it can engage the same person on a number of levels and a variety of issues.

The movement can also probably lay claim to a greater variety of tactics and approaches than any other. In addition to the forms of demonstrating, lobbying and direct action, which have already been mentioned, much use is made of expert opinion – professional philosophers such as Peter Singer, Mary Midgley and Tom Regan, and scientists such as Richard Ryder – and of the techniques of mass advertising, for example David Bailey's commercial for the Greenpeace/Lynx anti-fur campaign.



As well as diversifying to allow concentration on one particular abuse such as fox hunting or vivisection, animal rights groups are aware of the benefits of co-ordinated action, eg, four of the major anti-vivisection groups have banded together to form Mobilisation in order to try to oppose the new government bill on animals more effectively. The run up to the 1979 and 1983 elections saw the formation of umbrella organisations, the General Election Co-ordinating Committee for Animal Protection, and the more radical Animal Protection Alliance; and even at a local level there are confederations of animal rights groups, and magazines which deal with all forms of animal abuse, rather than dealing only with one area.

The combined effect of this action has been to bring animal rights to the attention of the political parties and all of them now realise that they must at least gesture in the direction of concern for animals. The problem, as ever, is in translating this into effective action. To take a current example: Labour's response to the government's new bill on animal experiments has been feeble in the extreme. There has also been the recent bizarre spectacle of Gwynneth Dunwoody, former shadow cabinet member, accepting a £4,000 per year post as a parliamentary consultant for the British Fur Trade Association. There may be more hope at the local level: Islington Labour council introduced an animal charter designed to improve the protection of animals, and a similar document is to be presented to Nottingham's Labour-controlled council in the near future. More importantly, surveys carried out before the 1983 election suggested that as many as 15% of the population would allow animal issues alone to decide how they voted. Also, it has been claimed that activity by the Animal Protection Alliance determined the result in several marginal constituencies.

In all of this, animal rights presents both a challenge to the Left and an opportunity to learn. Firstly, there is the conceptual level. The Left has, quite rightly, championed the notion of human dignity, but its perception of the limits of its proper concerns are too monolithically and statically human. The animal rights movement has demonstrated that human concerns do not begin and end with humanity. The second area is organisation, in particular the multi-strategic nature of the movement. This includes: working within and without the parliamentary system; being basically pro-Labour as notionally the most progressive party, but prepared to let non-party principles determine strategies and allegiances, and using whatever method seems appropriate to the need. The animal rights movement is also very

animal rights presents both a challenge to the Left and an opportunity to learn

decentralised and anti-bureaucratic – the Hunt Saboteurs Association does not even have an office or staff and yet manages to be highly effective. The third area is that of its aims. The disparate sections of the animal rights movement are able to agree upon objectives and identify a common enemy to be fought, and at the same time to acknowledge special or localised areas of concern, which does not result in the sectarian bickering so familiar in politics on the Left today.

The animal rights movement, with its diversity of tactics, objectives and support could point the way to a new conception of political action in the future in Britain. Because the movement has called into question the limits of the political, and has turned into activists people who would normally perhaps never have considered involvement in campaigns of this sort, it creates possibilities for large-scale participation in politics. It is not, however – or should not be – a case of the Left taking notice of animal rights in order to take it over or of cynically manipulating its radical energy for self-seeking ends. Rather socialists should realise that they cannot be speciesists and the Left should belatedly recognise that here is an issue which genuinely belongs on its political agenda. □

[1] *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, Jan 30, 1962.

[2] A report to the US Department of Agriculture in 1979 stated that of 143 drugs and pesticides likely to leave residues in raw meat and poultry, 42 are known to cause or suspected of causing cancer, 20 of causing birth defects, and 6 of causing mutations.

[3] In this test, you take a group of animals and force-feed them with anything from Paraquat to food colourant until half of them are dead (LD 50 stands for lethal dose for 50% of the animals.) This produces information like the fact that a person would need to drink 2,250 litres of wine *at a single sitting* before running the risk of poisoning by the tartaric acid in the wine.

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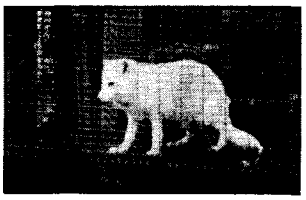

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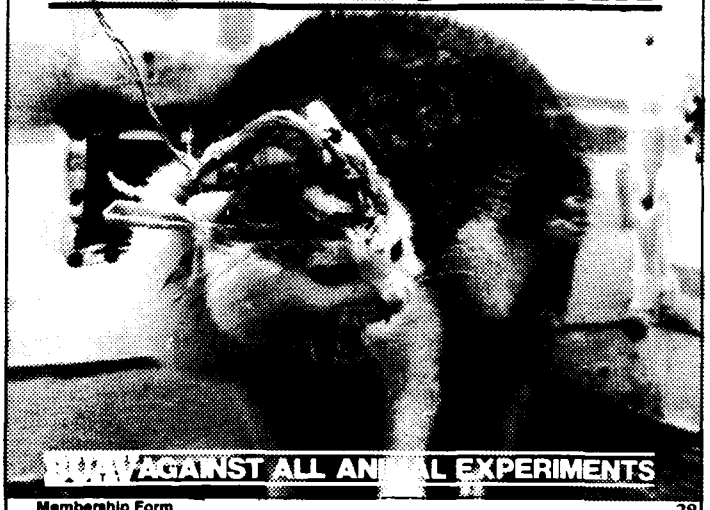

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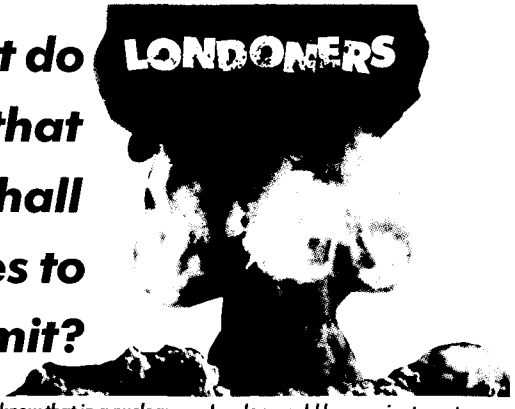

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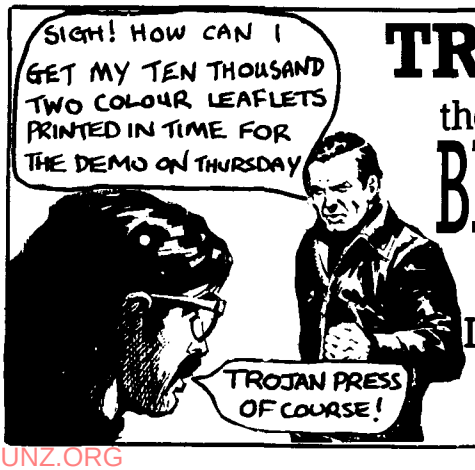

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Letters

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Emily Driver's article (*MT* March) was a welcome contribution to the subject of children's rights within our society.

Children have become marginalised and constitute an oppressed minority. They are systematically discriminated against and have no standing in law, and no right to independent legal representation. They are subject to physical and emotional abuse in the home, in school, in social service settings and in penal institutions.

There has been little substantial or coherent policy-making on the subject of child abuse and children's rights from either the Left or the Right, while under the present government's legislation more adolescents are being locked up in penal institutions. Perhaps it is time that the Left made the subject of children's lack of rights an issue – the children of today are the Red Wedge supporters of tomorrow.

Francis Charlton, Haywards Heath

CUTTING COMMENT

I would like to register the strongest possible objection to Emily Driver's article (*MT* March).

Firstly, I wonder who gave consent for the little girl's privacy to be flouted by displaying her picture to the readership. Even in medical texts the identity of those suffering is carefully protected.

Secondly, it is hard to disentangle real public outrage from the artificial variety of the tabloids. But I think that some of the public disquiet about Myra Hindley is due to her long running and distinctive campaign for release. The distinction drawn by Ms Driver between cutting up children and merely colluding in it is worthy only of contempt.

Thirdly, the grave public reaction to the sexual attack on a boy in Brighton had less to do with 'queer bashing' than the fact that a six-year old child was raped by three men, was dumped in the middle of nowhere and required a subsequent anaesthetic. If it was my child whose suffering was belittled to make a cheap sex-political point it would be the last copy of *Marxism Today* I would ever buy.

Chris Jones, Liverpool

NOXIOUS SERVANT

I do not doubt that John Lloyd (*MT* March) has uncorked such noxious substances into our cogitations that you will be inundated with calumny. But if he makes us think, turn back to the books, analyse as well as organise, then his preposterous arguments will have served us well.

We cannot feel friendly towards Eric Hammond for he is leading working class people in a direction directly opposite to the way we wish them to go.

If you are going to 'redistribute' the wages fund by truncating the highest then I suggest that all you succeed in doing is to reduce the overall level of wages. We would do far better to provide a minimum and force the general level upwards. Better still we should fight to expand the wages fund as a proportion of gross national product.

Once all the analysing is in full swing we must make sure that we do what is necessacy now to protect our class. Today that means coming to the aid of SOGAT.

Charlie Swain
Cardiff Congress in Support of Mining Communities

SPORTING IMAGES

Sports reporting in this country lags desperately behind other areas of journalism in conveying progressive social concerns. Still, I was disturbed by the traditional and rather conservative biographical account of Viv Richards by Peter Wilson (*MT* March). In particular, I object to Wilson's reinforcement of the images of battle and sex role stereotyping.

One problem is undoubtedly that the Left hasn't developed an alternative way or language for describing sporting activity. Even so, was it strictly necessary for words like 'gladiator', 'war zone', and 'might' to follow hard on one another in the first six sentences?

What seemed more dubious still was Wilson's definition of Richards' parents – father by job and club cricket, mother by childcare 'instilling religion and education into the Richards' children'. I wonder where we have heard these sentiments before.

Moves to include sports reporting in *Marxism Today* are to be welcomed, but should be on the basis of challenging the Right's framework and dominance in this field, not of reinforcing its images.

Hilary Barnard, London E8

SPICY SPACE

Since Bert Ramelson is given the space to air his views in *Marxism Today*, is it too much to hope that he might do the same for the Communist party in the pages of *World Marxist Review*?

Davie Laing, Glasgow

We welcome your letters for the May issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than April 11. The editor reserves the right to cut letters.

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Union Vision

PETE CARTER
A new axis

I enjoyed John Lloyd's article 'The Sparks are Flying' (March *MT*). His analysis of Fleet Street and the issues confronting the print workers helped people to develop a wider understanding as to the nature of the problems and will develop support for the dispute.

Of interest were John's points regarding the build up to the next general election, and the possible scenarios springing from the current developments within the trade union movement, and his challenge to the movement about what it offers in place of Hammondism.

We have reached an historical moment which coincides with the trade union movement reaching a watershed. The recent announcement that Norman Tebbit and Margaret Thatcher will write the next Conservative party general election manifesto is a clear indications that the Tories intend to make the trade unions a major issue.

How trade unions respond in this situation will be decisive to the outcome of that election. They can either get their act together with a positive contribution around policy and strategy, or fail to do that and end up assisting the return of a Tory government.

In reality and after six years of Tory rule, the trade union movement has experienced many major setbacks and defeats, and they have not been able to respond effectively against the all-round Thatcher attack upon them.

The government is floundering on industrial, economic and employment policy. There are sharp divisions within the Tory party expressed over the sale of Westland and British Leyland, and further illustrated by the resignation or sacking of 17 ministers in the past six years. But the Tories are still in office. Norman Tebbit in last year's Disraeli lecture predicted that the Tories will be around in the year 2000 and beyond. The key to this confidence is a vision, a long-term strategy of knowing the shape of society they want to see, linked with an immediate package of policies and a determination to win.

In contrast the trade union movement has no such vision; it fails to address the need for long-term strategy, has no shape to what it wants to see and lacks any credible, coherent alternative to Thatcherism both in the short and long-term in response to the government's all-round package. It has no concept of the politics of changing people's thinking. This lack of strategy denies the movement the ability to address today's problems effectively, and it ends up clinging to outdated practices, presenting itself as a divided movement, which allows the Tories to decide the political agenda.

To be effective in the build-up to the election, unions must begin to set the agenda, develop their own moral authority which in turn will help unions from a defensive and sometimes entrenched position. This entails transforming the way of conducting politics and the political practise of the trade union movement. Political posturing, and glorious opposition will not deliver.

In this respect, and linked to the need for struggle must go an ideological struggle. There needs to be a confrontation with the ideas that have dominated and bedevilled the trade union movement.

On the one hand there is the Militant Tendency alliance, and the recent cluster of the Campaign Group of MPs, the Communist Campaign Group and the *Morning Star*. All offer a narrow and sectarian approach, one that lacks strategy, and has no concept of broader alliances outside the trade union movement.

On the other hand are the forces ranged behind *new realism* and around which we are experiencing attempts to bring centre stage of the trade unions reformist policies. These policies breed passivity, a feeling of not being able to do anything, of waiting for the return of a Labour government, and of being opposed to struggle, viewing it as an electoral liability.

Neither position is helpful. Not only do they divide the movement, but they become locked into a right-left conflict which completely fails to address the concerns of the British people.

But there is another way, and that responsibility rests with the broad Left of British politics. There is an urgent need for this tendency to assert itself. Important in this respect is the Labour Coordinating Committee, and a whole host of personalities like Bickerstaffe, Sawyer, Knapp, Livingstone and Blunkett.

This is still an emerging group with problems of cohesion and coherence, and lacking in confidence, but crucial to winning the centre ground of the trade union movement.

The recent election of John Golding to the post of general secretary of the National Communications Union, discussions on a merger between APEX and TSSA, and proposed amalgamations of the civil service unions are aimed at strengthening the right wing. The right wing are hopeful that Jordan will win the AUEW's presidential seat, especially after his announcement of merger plans with the EETPU if elected.

The EETPU's recent withdrawal from the brink in accepting the TUC decisions about its conduct at Wapping, was in recognition of these developments, which point to the formation of a new axis.

There can be no doubt that this formation is preparing for this year's TUC and Labour party conferences with a strong determination to undermine the Left and its policies, and in particular influence the Labour party manifesto in the direction as John Lloyd describes, of a new kind of trade unionism.

The Left of Britain's unions must not be caught, as on previous occasions, responding to the initiatives of the right wing. This entails unions consciously buiding up a bloc of social forces united by common concerns, and thus beginning to isolate the government and depriving it of its allies, and of the support which it has derived by integrating popular themes into its own ideological system. The tade unions in order to succeed must combine the interests of other social groups and democratic movements with those of its own interests.

Such an approach means commitment to an immediate programme, one that is radical and transforming, which creates the opportunity not just for changing people's thinking, but also the generation of mass popular struggle. The Left of British trade unionism has not got a record of successes around this approach, but it is now the challenge and if it does not rise and assert itself when Kinnock knocks it will have nothing to offer. If the broad Left does not assert itself over the dominant tendencies of sectarianism and reformism, then Kinnock will not knock.

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THE END OF THE TEENAGE ERA

Interview with Julien Temple

Julien Temple has collaborated with The Sex Pistols on the film *The Great Rock 'n Roll Swindle*. He is known for his videos of David Bowie and the Rolling Stones. Through his latest venture, the film of Colin MacInnes' book *Absolute Beginners*, he makes a final defiant cry for teendom. Here he talks to Marek Kohn about using popular cinema to explore political contradictions, about the teenage era he wants to capture and about his commitments to making mass-entertainment films.

How long ago did you start thinking it might be a good idea to make a musical about teendom in the 1950s?

I read the book in 1980. I had read the other books when I was at school but *Absolute Beginners* had been stolen from the shelves. I wanted to make a film that would clear my head of the 'teenage' obsession and this struck me as the ideal vehicle for a film about London and the energy of youth.

But it wasn't immediately obvious to do it as a musical because the book presented certain problems – the main one was in adapting the role of the narrator. I think many people have had a go at trying to adapt it and run into problems trying to keep the energy that comes through the descriptive style without resorting to an endless voice-over. It seemed to me that if you thought about the information in the book as a series of musical 'numbers' as they do in advertising – numbers which explore the nature of the time – then you can understand, for example, the Teds by performing a number rather than by talking about them. Music is central to the book – jazz is seen through the book. I love the musical and I don't agree with Howard Barker when he argues that the musical is an authoritarian form of culture. That just isn't true. The musical is like a computer – it's what you do with it that counts.

Why did you feel the need to 'wrap up the teenage era'?

That was a very personal feeling because I have done a lot of work in that area and I'd like to move on to do other things. But I did want to say what I had to say on a big scale. Another thing that attracted me to this book was that it gave me the opportunity to bounce off from 1985 to 1958 as a historical period, to show how the teenage energy of the 50s is just no longer around.

Did you feel a sense of frustration that there wasn't that energy anymore?

Yes. In a sense the teenage era was aborted. I wanted to develop certain ideas that came from the Sex Pistols about the nature of teenage culture in England today – a force which I think is very much spent. Not totally, because I don't think you can parcel things out so neatly – after all people buy records and others are still making fortunes out of youth – but in a real adventurous sense it seems to be finished. It's a bit like joining the army now: you are given your kit, issue and age, your copy of *Smash Hits*, your haircut – and you're a teenager. It's like conscription.

What were the aspects of the book that you most wanted to translate into a musical?

photo: Peter Anderson

Julien Temple: enfant terrible of the film industry?

I wanted to capture a city changing at a very important time in its history – seen through a very subjective pair of eyes and moving between different realities. I didn't want it to be a documentary, I wanted it to be personal and unreal, just like the reality of those cultural moments. In this way I wanted to show the whole Americanisation of England, the arrival of blacks in this country and the entrance of advertising as a national shrinking agent. I also wanted to show the 1950s' attack on the Victorian legacy. Now that Thatcher is trying to return to that there is a point in making a film that opens up a view on to that period.

One of the main problems in translating the book into the film must have been that there are actually two books: there is the book about teenage and then, as the legend goes, MacInnes was in Notting Hill during the race riots of 1958 and that impelled him to write the latter part of the book very eloquently about race. This is what takes the book beyond teendom.

To balance the fairy story of the book with one guy's journey through a summer with fascism and the race riots was the major problem we faced. Dance and then violence is a difficult thing to make work and it's a dangerous thing to try but I think that risk element is exciting. Some people would probably say that you shouldn't deal with the emotions of the race riot but I think you have to confront these things. They exist. A lot of the dynamic of a riot is the entertainment as well. So, in a strange way, we were trying to get to the heart of the riot. To show people dancing doesn't necessarily mean that they are having a good time. There's a kind of nightmare entertainment value in it which is why the Teds of Notting Hill were really into it. They didn't do it because they hated black people particularly. They were led into it by being bored and they were used by the Mosley groups in the area.

We departed slightly from the book in very clearly showing the fascists meeting. Mosley stood as MP the next year though he wasn't actually there. I'm quite happy for Mosley to be there in the film – it was not meant to be a literal translation in that sense. I wanted to make it clear that it wasn't Teddy boys hating blacks – it was just that they were whipped up into this frenzy of excitement.

But, in making a movie about the 1950s – particularly the glamour of the 1950s – aren't

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Recreating the 1950s – Eddie O'Connell and Patsy Kensit star as the young photographer Colin and his fashion designer girlfriend Suzette in *Absolute Beginners*.

you simply trading on ideas of nostalgia and escapism that prop up precisely those values you are trying to expose?

I don't think that is totally true because half of the film is set in Notting Hill which was a stinking slum area and it does touch on the fascists going from the East End to the west of London and inspiring the riots. None of that is particularly glamorous. It's not normally the kind of thing you find in musicals.

I hope the main thrust of the glamour is in the idea that kids, for the first time, feel they can create and shape their life as an adventure in the way that Dada painters might have thought of it in the 20s or in the way that Oxbridge spies might have thought of it in the 30s. In a sense there is the beginning of a great adventure there.

As people of your generation were saying about punk rock in the 1970s?

Yes. I'm still radioactive from 1978 and I still feel it. I did base the summer of 1958 on the summer of 76 because that was a time when I did feel very close to a city. That's what I wanted the character in the book to feel – that he almost owned a city with his cohorts and that they saw a different city to that seen by everyone else walking down the street. Soho meant something to the kids in the film that it doesn't mean to the people who are there today. I wanted to say that London can be an amazing place and I remember in 76 it was an extraordinary place. Why isn't it today?

There is a danger of nostalgia and we're obviously using an interest in the 50s to sell this film. But this period was very important in shaping the 60s and 70s and to understand, for example, what makes a working class Tory tick. Thatcher is there today because of what happened in the 50s to a large extent. To cause people to think about that in an exciting way – and music is exciting – allows them to think about doing something in the future. But, there seems to be an inbuilt resistance to taking recent history seriously. There is rather what I call a Capital Radio view of history – that 1958 was The Everley Brothers, 61 is Billy Fury, 63 is The Beatles – and that's postwar British history.

The media today is run by people from the 60s who were brought up to be forever young and if you start saying '1958 is a long time ago and a lot of water has flown under the bridge' they begin to think 'God, have I got grey hairs in my beard'. They can't pretend that they are now anything but middle-aged men.

In a way you seem to be saying that Absolute Beginners, *the musical, is looking at the summer of 1958 through both the present and through the summer of 76. Do you really think that there is something that was present in 1976 and 58 that is absent now in London?*

It exists as a kind of tourist attraction. When kids come to London they see something that represents no real threat in terms of the current situation. It still looks colourful, youth is still being marketed . . . but there's no direct inspiration from the time it is in. To me it's very flabby.

A lot of kids will see Absolute Beginners *as simply a spectacular musical with all their favourite groups. Did you ever experience a tension between those who were financing the project who obviously would want to have more stars, more spectacle, and people who were trying to view the film with the elements you've been describing.*

Enjoyment is a very important aspect of the film and I hope the kids will be dancing in the aisles.

When I went to sell it to Wardour Street, however, I didn't sell it in the way that we've been talking. They wouldn't want to know if you started talking like that. You have to say 'we've got David Bowie' and they understand that. There was always the possibility that the things that would be cut in the films were the things about the black situation in Notting Hill, the Teds, the less glamorous things, but the side of the film that I was very interested in including. But, you do need a commercial skeleton to make a movie on this scale, to reach the numbers of people I wanted to reach. I never wanted to write a treatise about teendom. I'd rather do it in a much more aggressive attack – to me that's the power of making movies rather than writing books.

But how did you go to Wardour Street and what did you sell them? Where did you get the money from?

I sold them a book called *Absolute Beginners* which they hadn't heard about by

Music is central to the film: David Bowie as an advertising executive.

sticking the 'right' magazines, like *The Face*, under their noses and, by getting the book mentioned in the right places, it became important enough for them to consider it as a valid project for a film. But they didn't like the idea of a musical. They said it hadn't been done for a long time so it wouldn't work. They all want to do last

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year's hit you see. They don't want anything too risky.

I was sure that the music was our main ally. In Hollywood they may not have heard of London and MacInnes but they know David Bowie. I wanted to make a film about London that was understandable to the rest of the world and music is a great antennae – the rest of the world is fascinated by English music. But we didn't just choose music, we chose people that were right, who were from London, and people who could sell records – Bowie, Sade, that got Goldcrest excited.

There has been a considerable amount of publicity about Goldcrest's financial problems with Revolution *and* Absolute Beginners *going over budget.*

The problems for Goldcrest are very big. They've lost a hell of a lot of money on *Revolution* which has severely damaged the possibility of the British film industry carrying on. There are only two major producers of film in this country – EMI and Goldcrest, and of the three films that they've made for release this year it's difficult to see the remaining two recouping enough to pull through. *The Mission* is not a *Rambo*, once again it's a *Readers' Digest* Oscar-hunter type of film rather than a big hit type of film. *Absolute Beginners* is a very English film which I think will work in the more open parts of America but it won't do a mega-sell in Middle America which would be necessary to get Goldcrest out of trouble. I blame them for making films without regard for paying for them. There is an inbuilt attitude in the higher echelons of the sandcastle that you make a film for Oscars, for good reviews; quality in the middle-brow sense of the word is what it's all about.

They think that the dirty business of getting the kids in to see a film in Newcastle or Liverpool isn't very important as long as it does well in the Odeon Haymarket. Films are very expensive. You can't have a film industry without pushing people to go and see the films. You have to be aggressive as we have been with *Absolute Beginners* and say 'this is a film that you *must* see'.

There is a generation that has held on to power for too long in the film industry. It's a pity because there are a lot of younger people whom I'm sure could make very good films if they got control.

But your film has not been trouble-free as a production?

It's probably been one of the most difficult films in the history of the British cinema to make, largely because we were trying to do something that people didn't really want us to do, and all with a young producer, a cameraperson who had never done a major film, and unknown actors. On top of this it's a film about race riots – burning cars rather than Olympic torches – and it was about this slightly sordid thing, pop culture. It wasn't necessarily the kind of England that would win an Oscar.

When your teenagers flock to the Odeon in Newcastle to see the film, do you think they will be watching it in a different way from the pop promos on The Tube*?*

It's certainly going to be different – it's going to be about 300 times bigger and louder. That's the point. If you get 600m people to see it then a *percentage* are going to think about it.

Why do you like film so much as a medium to work in?

I believe very strongly in the cinema. I hate television and I don't think it's an entertainment medium. I hate the fact that it's aimed at a strange thing called a 'viewer' who is slumped in an armchair in their millions. Making movies for television avoids the main challenge of selling, which I think is part of the artwork of movie-making.

TAKING TO THE STREETS

Rex Barker

On Sunday, April 20 thousands of people will line the roadside from Greenwich to Westminster to witness and participate in the sixth London Marathon. At the same time a far greater number will view the event on tv in the relaxation of their own homes. The London Marathon has rapidly become one of the most popular national events as well as a major competition in international sport. As both sport and spectacle there is a significant difference between the way in which the marathon is experienced by those participating and those encouraging runners along the roadside, and by those who watch it 'live' on tv.

The London Marathon was first organised in 1981 by the former Olympic gold medal winner, Christopher Brasher together with the Sports Council and the Greater London Council and sponsored by Gillette. Since then the organisers have more than achieved their aims – to bring the public into sport and to make participants out of spectators – as entries have increased from under 8,000 in 1981 to an expected 23,000 this year. Applications are already over 90,000 and entries are reserved for overseas runners, wheelchairs and championship runners. Mars now provides the funding and prize money and the GLC assists in administration and on the ground, providing the start line in Blackheath and the finish on Westminster Bridge.

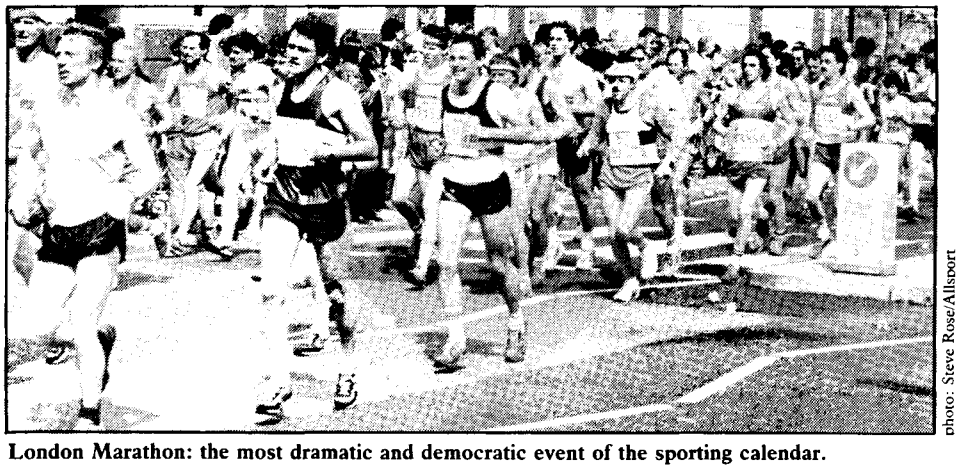

photo: Steve Rose/Allsport

London Marathon: the most dramatic and democratic event of the sporting calendar.

Despite uncertainty about the future of the County Hall building there seems to be little doubt that the marathon will continue in its present form after the GLC's abolition. The London Marathon intends to remain independent of government or local government bodies for finance and any future profits are ear-marked for the

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development of sport and leisure facilities in the London boroughs.

With participants coming from all over Britain and abroad and from all walks of life, entertainment, competition and charity are equal facets of an occasion in which differences of sex, race, class, even physical ability are set aside for the endurance of what has become a 26-mile carnival. As the organisers have stated in their official programme, it is a day in which the 'human race can be one joyous family, working together, laughing together, achieving the impossible together'.

Nevertheless, the event's promoters have distinguished between the 'serious runners' and the 'fun runners'; the 'elite' and the 'vets and virgins'; those competing for the prize money and those raising money for charities. With the familiar format of informed commentary on the international athletes and participating reporters interviewing the 'fun runners' on screen, television coverage has reinforced the distinction between the professionals and a much larger proportion of amateurs.

The route begins in Greenwich Park and goes east to Woolwich and then west to follow the river through Deptford, Surrey Docks and Bermondsey. Then over Tower Bridge it turns eastwards for the six mile loop around the Isle of Dogs. Then west again, past the London Docks and the Tower, along the Embankment via Trafalgar Square and the Mall to turn past Buckingham Palace in the direction of the finishing line on Westminster Bridge.

Together with the bands and crowds along the roadside and the numerous London landmarks, the route provides television with the material with which to evoke the cultural identity of the nation – its people wedded together in harmony and *esprit de corps*. If we are to congratulate the BBC for covering the marathon with the reverence usually reserved for state occasions, then we must also bear in mind that 'live' tv has seldom the opportunity to project an image of London and the British people taking possession of the streets in the most dramatic and democratic event of the sporting calendar. For if the BBC's 'tour of famous sights' presents us with the RAF band on the Mall, the band of the Welsh Guards, beefeaters outside the Palace, it also brings us the pearly kings and queens in Greenwich, a band and crowd singing the 'Hokey Cokey' – all participating in what has become not merely an event but, for tv at least, a celebration of our national belonging.

PUTTING THE POPULAR BACK INTO CULTURE

Brian Hipkin

The South Bank of the River Thames between Westminster Bridge and Waterloo Bridge is an area stalked by the ghosts of curtailed dreams. In 1951 the bulldozers moved in to smash down the site of the Festival of Britain. So ended a promise that was symbolised by a commitment to involve ordinary people in their own future. In the Festival popular cultural forms such as television and the cinema were not only taken seriously but were often the vehicles used to display Britain's postwar technological advances. All that now remains isolated in a sea of concrete and car parks, is the Royal Festival Hall, which if the festival organisers had listened to King George VI would now be called 'The Peoples' Palace'.

A palace it may have been but certainly not for the people, until 1981 when Tony Banks, then chair of the GLC's arts and recreation committee, decided to open up its vast under-used foyer area. The result of which being that the building is used all day and the attendance at concerts there rose by 50% in the first year of the new policy.

This month may see another ghost walking not only along the South Bank but wandering all over the capital. The hammer of abolition has been swung at a new vision of popular culture, one that has been given life over the past five years by the biggest single grant aid budget within the GLC. The successes and failures of the GLC's arts and recreation committee's policies must provide an object lesson for the Left in this country. Over the last five years prevailing ideas about popular cultural forms have been changed and a whole new political constituency addressed, and within limits, its support maintained.

There is seemingly a close link between forms of popular culture ascribed to the population of an area and the identity given to that area. So until recently the image of a stereotypical Londoner was made up of essentially white male working class pastimes: beer, dogs and football. The broader political aims that entered County Hall with the new Labour administration, strove to address a new sort of Londoner. With over 140 mother tongues spoken in an area where the average length of stay was only five years and where women were organising themselves on their own terms, the old images of the working classes had to be adjusted.

As both Lord Birkett, director of arts and recreation at the GLC, and Alan Tomkins, policy adviser to the arts and recreation committee, admit, up until 1981 there was little to choose between the leisure policies of either Tory or Labour administrations in London. Both seemed to subscribe to the prevailing notions that had been handed down unchanged from the paternalism of the 19th century.

On taking office in 1981, the new administration found the old committee structures of the GLC for making policy in the fields of arts and recreation still working within these outdated notions. The pressure from the grassroots was already building up. Grant applications were flooding in, there was no staff to deal with them, little or no policy was in place and with arts grants finding their way on occasion to the in-trays of the housing department, it

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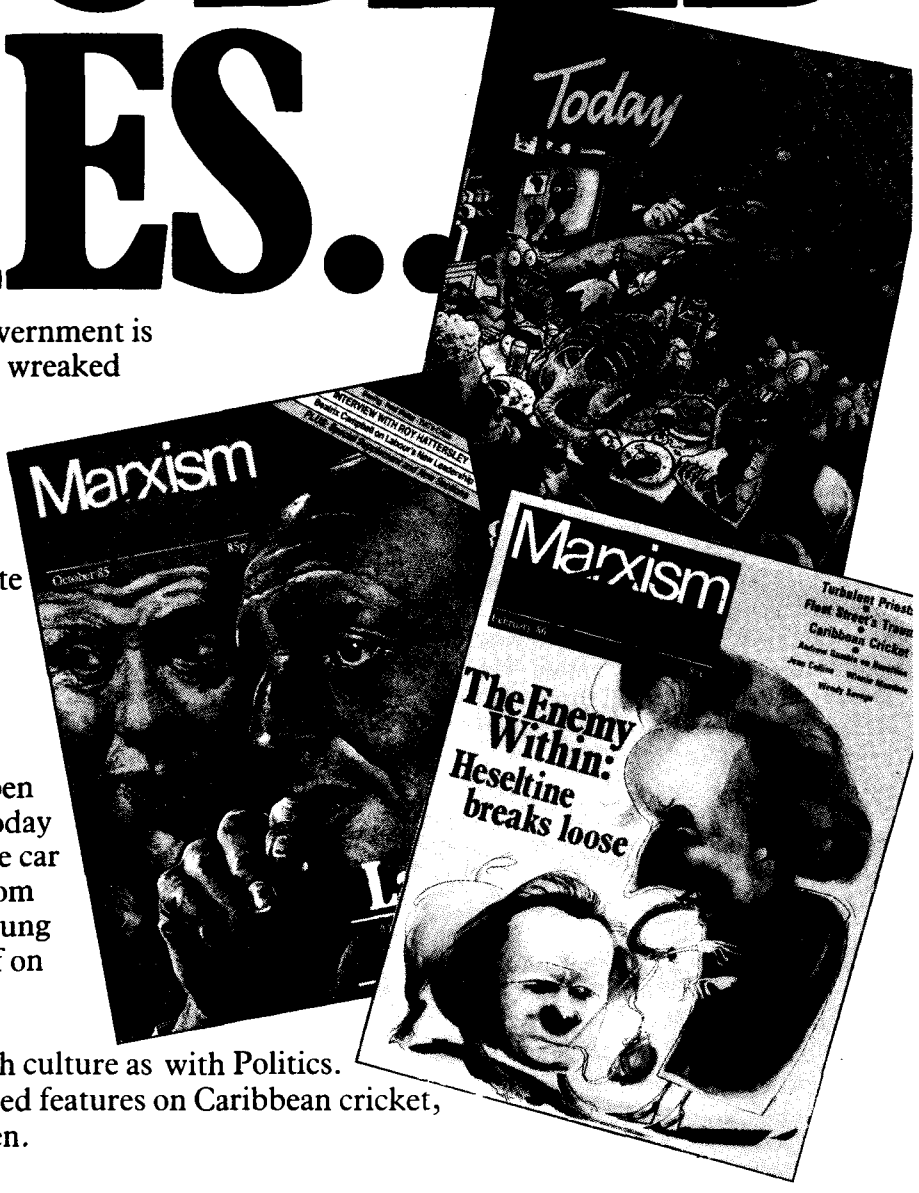
TROUBLED TIMES...



From Westland to Westminster the government is in disarray. Murdoch and Marcos have wreaked havoc in their respective empires. Realignments everywhere are hogging the headlines.

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seemed as if the promises were not to be fulfilled. Indeed, when Alan Tomkins arrived in late 1981 he found that arts grants were being given out by the GLC's finance committee!

There were several choices facing Tomkins; devolve the arts and recreation policy to the boroughs, hand them over to a body outside of the GLC's committee structure such as the Greater London Arts Association, or take a more radical path to make the policy the result of grassroots involvement within the GLC itself. Taking the success of the women's committee co-option of grassroots activists, Tomkins invited individuals on to the newly formed sub-committees that were to deal with community arts, ethnic arts, sports and the South Bank complex. He consciously tried to reverse the normal criteria for selection on to such bodies, that is artistic abilities first and political criteria second. So by choosing from socially excluded groups, the community arts committee never had less than 70% women on it and the ethnic arts committee was 100% black and Asian.

The full force of politics and arts mixing together did not make it all plain sailing, committees would meet for up to six hours without giving a single grant. Unlike the Arts Council the GLC found that they were limited by the law in what they could and could not support. Indeed it came as a surprise when they were told that under the Local Government Act of 1972 photography was not an art form.

One of the most fundamental shifts over the last five years has been not to provide large facilities, but instead give aid to help groups facilitate their arts or sporting activities. It was a conscious attempt to shift the relationship between the individual and the local state from one of centralised direction to one of mutual support. One of the clearest examples of the effect of this was in the variety of festivals and events sponsored by the GLC whose spirit united politics and fun.

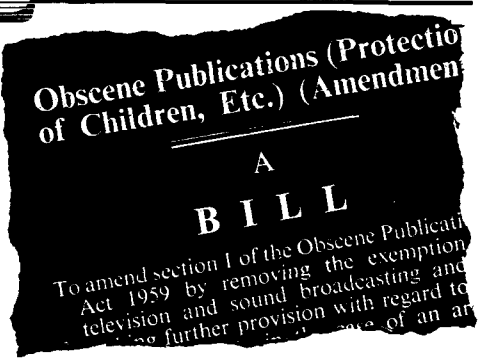
During the 'Jobs for a Change' festival over 15,000 people went and sat and listened to a series of debates in the council chamber in County Hall. Ken Livingstone invited people into his office offering hospitality in the form of a mountain of Pepsi tins on his desk. Small things in themselves but powerful object lessons in humanity and the nature of politics in the late 80s.

Now the plugs have been pulled on the GLC what will be the fate of their policies on popular culture? For Alan Tomkins the longest-lasting effect will be on the language of culture. No longer will community art consist of mounting an opera in the Ford works at Dagenham (a suggestion made in the dying days of the Tory regime at County Hall), no longer will definitions of culture be limited to an essentially bourgeois list. Community newspapers, video, photography, theatre for the deaf and blind; are now to be recognised as valid art forms. Their power rests in their ability to carry ideas to a wider audience. They reflect the ways the powerless can bring some control back into their own lives. A control that is achieved by speaking not just to the heads but to the hearts of their audience.

With new levels of arts funding being announced by central government and with the begging bowl being passed around the London boroughs it looks as if there will be many a broken heart among community and ethnic arts groups.

The response of the local authorities is as yet largely unknown. Predictably Westminster City Council have opted for the prestige of supporting the English National Opera to the tune of £2m. Yet what is to be the fate of a community theatre such as Jackson's Lane? Their funding will have to be provided by no less than four separate boroughs. Despite the lessons of what support for arts and sport can achieve, how far will rate-capped London boroughs be able to fund the huge shortfall between central government grants and those provided in the past by the GLC?

The South Bank will soon be quiet, no festivals, no marches. The lights will be going out in community theatres and video workshops all over London Asian and Irish sports just starting to develop with the aid of GLC grants, will now have to start a possibly vain search for commercial sponsorship. But no amount of abolition will be able to take away the pride and sense of involvement that has been opened up by the GLC's policy on popular culture.


Obscene Publications (Protectio
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television and sound broadcasting and
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CHURCHILL'S CRUSADE

Sioned-Mair Richards

When Winston Churchill came near the top of the ballot for private members' bills, there, waiting in the wings, was Mary Whitehouse with a ready-made 'Obscene Publications (Protection of Children etc) (Amendment)' bill. It aims to censor television and radio by including them in the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, thus opening them up for criminal prosecution. The bill had its second reading in January, when it was passed overwhelmingly (and included a guest appearance from Mrs Thatcher in the 'ayes' lobby). It is currently at the committee stage and will report back to the House in early April – it is likely to become law by the end of the year.

It is a tribute to Mrs Whitehouse that she has never given up. All the gains of the 60s – abortion rights, gay rights etc – which the Left took to be safely won are under attack in a climate where nothing can be said to be permanently decided. Last year there was the Powell bill implicitly attacking abortion rights, this year the Churchill bill is aiming at 'adult images' on tv and radio and, in an implicit way, gay sexuality.

The bill itself is rather a muddle with amendments being added by Churchill at every committee meeting, and other pieces being dropped, most notably the infamous laundry list which specified acts which should not be portrayed 'in actual or simulated form'. This could have meant Shakespearean classics such as *King Lear* (Gloucester's eyes being gouged out) or *Titus Andronicus* (cannibalism) being banned from tv. Or even films by animal rights activists, showing 'vicious cruelty' to animals in order to condemn it. Interestingly too, many of the acts specified would be mainly associated with gay sexuality. Heterosexual sexual intercourse and rape were not listed. This homophobic

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air can be seen in debates around the bill in which only two examples are given of the type of programme which the bill seeks to ban. They are two Derek Jarman films, *Sebastianne* and *Jubilee*. Films by an openly gay director, one of which has homoerotic overtones.

Another aspect of the debate is the implicit notion that television *per se* is a bad thing. Suspicion of this (for some) new medium comes from both the Left and the Right. The Left, because it believes that it is biased in supporting the status quo, on the Right because of the belief that it has caused or at least hastened a decline in moral standards. As Sir Nicholas Bonsor (MP for Upminster) said: 'Those of us whose families are not yet grown up do not need to watch television for long to know that there is a constant stream of filthy language and of abuse of television freedom whereby obscene and filthy images are put before our children daily'. He does not furnish any proof for this sweeping statement but it lies sufficiently within the public unease of what happens on our sets to be left unchallenged by many.

What sort of 'protection' is the Bill offering? Churchill is clear on this. It is not from the casual violence of *Starsky and Hutch* or the *A-Team*, where getting hit doesn't hurt and being shot isn't painful. It is from programmes that are realistic that protection is sought. The play *Reservations*, a funny/sad drama which challenges sexual stereotyping by portraying a teenage boy trying, and failing, to measure up to the 'norm' that all boys get laid endlessly and easily all the time, is one of the examples to which exception is taken. Although this programme went out late at night there was a possibility of children waking up, coming downstairs and being traumatised by exposure to the programme, or parents might video it and then leave it around where young hands might find it.

Who are the opposition? A disparate group of people appear to be in alliance. In the House, the Thatcherite Matthew Parris was the only Tory to vote against the bill. Outside parliament there has been the predictable anti-censorship lobby, eg, the British Academy of Film and Television Awards, the British Film Institute, John Mortimer, Melvyn Bragg, Michael Winner. Opposition has been couched in the 60s language of 'freedom of speech' which sounds curiously dated to many feminists who have seen this used as a smokescreen for pornography and the exploitation of women in the past. However there is feminist opposition to the bill, for it clearly does nothing to further the cause of women. 'Page 3' would not be included, nor the infamous 'Dial a Girl' phone lines run by *Penthouse*.

All this opposition is having some effect as can be seen by Churchill's constant changes to the bill, but will that be enough? There has been no mass opposition to the bill from the public, probably due to the worries already mentioned, ie, the unease that tv does go a bit far sometimes. So the Bill looks set to become law and what then? Will the tv companies give us 'four hour *Blue Peter*' and extend the self-censorship they've already started (one of the *Horizon* programmes on Aids has already been 'postponed'), or will they carry on until Mrs Whitehouse finds an excuse to go to court as she did over *The Romans in Britain* and *Gay News*? The outcome of that case would surely be as big a landmark as the *Lady Chatterley* case and would mark out the boundaries of popular culture until the end of the century.

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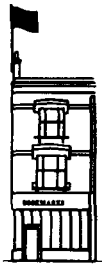

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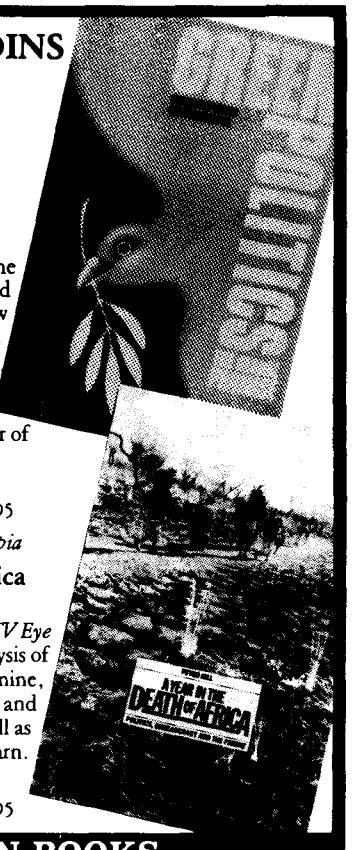

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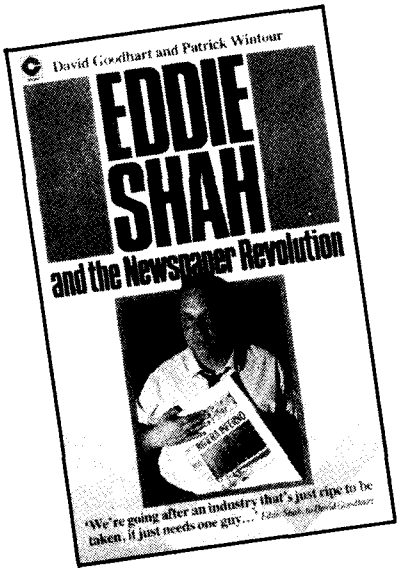

David Goodhart and Patrick Wintour
EDDIE SHAH
and the Newspaper Revolution
'We're going after an industry that's just ripe to be taken, it just needs one guy...'

Today's News

Eddie Shah and the Newspaper Revolution
David Goodhart and Patrick Wintour
Coronet £2.50

'National newspapers are an industry ripe for the taking' bragged Eddie Shah when he began the long march of his 'newspaper revolution'. However, many doubted that this self-important union buster from Warrington really had the financial or political resources to take on the multi-millionaire proprietors of Fleet Street. *Today* is now out and to that extent Shah has more modestly entered the national newspaper jungle. Surely nobody seriously expected existing newspaper proprietors to allow themselves to be turned over by the upstart who is generously deified in this new book?

We learn that Shah is a self-made businessman and the fourth cousin of the Aga Khan. He therefore belongs to one of the oldest and richest royal families whose lineage traces back to the prophet Mohammed. It is not surprising that this drifting son of a quasi divine family, who believes himself to be telepathic, has a powerful sense of destiny. While awaiting destiny's ultimate call he has awarded himself an annual salary of £100,000, lives in a £150,000 house, drives a BMW and a Range Rover, plays golf and flies a plane, mixes with the local elite and sends the kids to a private school. Mammon has clearly replaced Mohammed for the street-wise rich kid.

This affectionate, teetotal, daydreaming romantic will in the long run be treated benevolently by Fleet Street despite his bravado in going national. The style and content of *Today* is unlikely substantially to threaten the market that it most wants to penetrate. *Today*'s politics are expressed better in the *Daily Mail* as is the sycophantic coverage of the royal family. The promised news in colour has been very disappointing and second-rate.

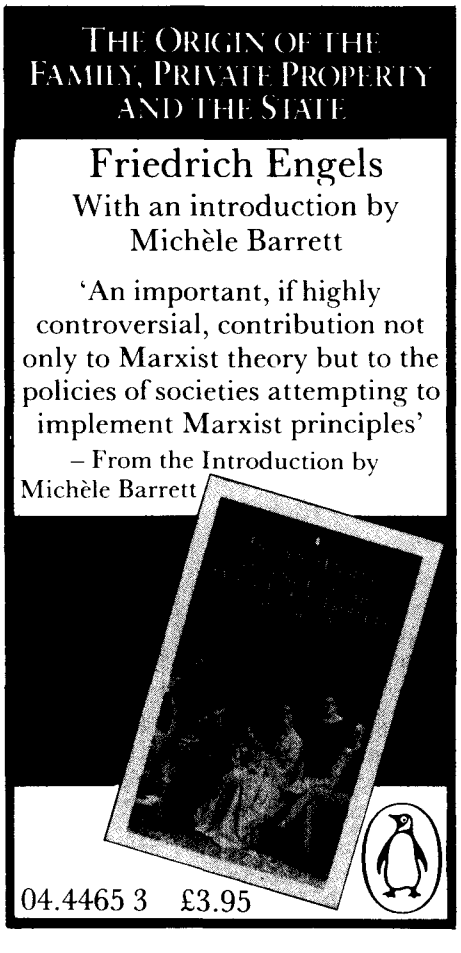
More importantly Shah gave an object lesson in deviousness in the early 1980s when he liberally used Thatcher's laws over a two-and-a-half year period to de-unionise his Messenger Group Newspapers. This lesson was not lost on Rupert Murdoch and was well chronicled by Mark Dickinson in his book *To Break a Union*. Shah's pressure also quickened the pace of Fleet Street's introduction of more cost-cutting new technology, and for these things the press barons will be grateful. Their gratitude will extend no further than not wanting to personally pauperise him if yet another takeover is in the offing. In the course of prosecuting their circulation war, the ruthlessness of the Fleet Street proprietors against each other, as well as towards their own workers, is legend. They have spent twice as much on bingo promotion than Shah raised to start up; simultaneously journalistic standards have declined. Neither Shah or new technology will change this.

Shah's financial and ideological backers are a roll call of honour to Thatcherism: Norris MacWhirter of the ultra-right Freedom Association; their Lordships Taylor, Forte, McAlpine and Cayzer, all ennobled by Thatcher and generous donors to Tory funds; Andrew Neil, editor of *The Sunday Times* and Murdoch ideologue; the no problem EETPU delivered by the SDP peer Lord Harris completes the picture, not to mention the rogue Bank of Hungary which put up £7m to buy the presses. But the new proprietor is putty in nobody's hands. His own views shine forth. Shah's 13 point guide to his paper's coverage is fully laid out. It is an embarrassing mixture of good intentions and everyday Thatcherism, reflecting much of Britain's media.

When not flattering Shah, Goodhart and Wintour present some useful background and updates on recent developments. They point out the 'slow shuffle to the right', describing the politics of the most recent entrants to Fleet Street, and the complete failure of anti-monopoly law. Equally they highlight declining standards of journalism and rightly question the cost-saving assumption on which new technology is based.

However their conclusions are commonplace. Trade unions and the Left are blamed for not prioritising new technology as a means of reforming Fleet Street. They repeat and essentially confirm the idea that Shah is the 'harbinger of the rebirth of a politically diverse press' even though all the evidence is the opposite. But they qualify their point by reference to small circulation (100,000) specialist papers aimed at the affluent, who would represent the advertising profile needed, or who could afford the high cover price. This would still leave power in the hands of the Maxwells and Murdochs as the old hot metal monopolies become new high tech monopolies.

They rubbish the efforts of some on the Left to build support for new laws and to win government intervention to establish printing facilities, a fairer distribution system, a launch fund through an advertising levy and limits on ownership. They also ignore campaigns like the right of reply,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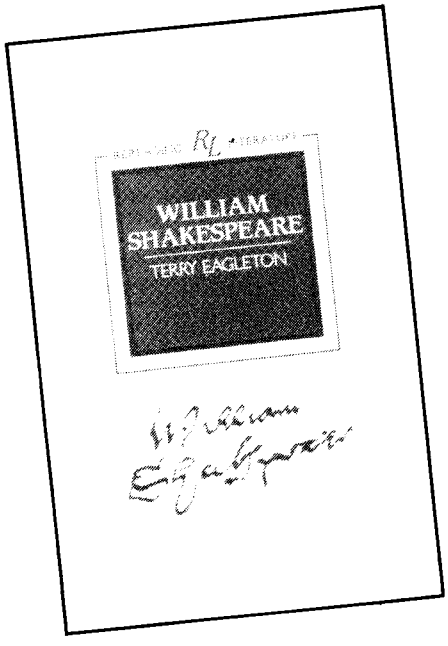
which has been effective and is part of the strategy to build the alliance that will be needed in the run up to the next general election to achieve those wider objectives.

To win a genuinely politically plural press in Britain is a profoundly political question. New technology is no more politically neutral than was old technology when it is subject to the free market and its propensity to monopoly.

Mike Power



Dense Texts

William Shakespeare
Terry Eagleton
Basil Blackwell £12.00 hbk, £3.95 pbk

This slim volume seems to attempt the impossible: to re-read Shakespeare in the light of the insights given by marxism, feminism and structuralism in just over 100 pages. It's a dense book full of occasional and seductive perceptions and flights of semiological wit. Eagleton says in his introduction that 'it is difficult to read Shakespeare without feeling that he was certainly familiar with the writings of Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein and Derrida', and the starting point of the book is that these thinkers and writers, and more besides, are inherent in Shakespeare as we, modern readers, read him.

This will come as no surprise to those who are familiar with the propositions of structural linguistics, but for those who are not the book may appear opaque, impenetrable and, at times, will seem to indulge itself in high-flown academicism. For example, when Eagleton describes Macbeth (at the end of the play) as 'a floating signifier in ceaseless, doomed pursuit of an anchoring signified' one feels, at first, an impulsive sense of the absurdity of this writer's conflations and it is, at times, hard to digest the anachronisms and dissonances of this kind of hindsight. On the other hand, there is a compact energy in the ideas produced by this recklessness.

Eagleton examines the plays in terms of general themes and uses the plays freely to illustrate his own preoccupations. This allows him to make connections between ideas which come from different disciplines of thought. His observations about language at the beginning of the chapter entitled 'Law' (which deals with *The Merchant of Venice, Measure For Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*) are useful and clear.

I found really interesting and original his description of the relationship between romantic love and language in his chapter on 'Desire' (*Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*). He pins this down with a quotation from Jonathan Culler's book *On Deconstruction*: 'To say "I love you" is always at some level a quotation'. Thus making the point that in our intimate personal relationships which seem to us so unique the language we use becomes more and more generalised.

He points out the similarity between Shakespeare's description of the anarchic forces released by Macbeth's murdering of Duncan and Marx's description in *The Communist Manifesto* of the revolutionary nature of the bourgeois epoch. The world which Marx describes where 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinion, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned . . .' recalls the world in which Macbeth lives and dies.

The perception that Shakespeare is dealing in his plays with the struggle between the values of the aristocratic measured world of honour and feudalism and those of the emerging boundless bourgeois individualism is not new, but Eagleton gives it new light and refreshing implications.

The main drift of the book is that there is a contradiction in Shakespeare between the view of the world expressed in his writing and his political beliefs. Eagleton seems to be saying that, in the act of writing, Shakespeare knows the world to be chaotic, unfixed and open to chance whereas the triumphant values in his plays are those of a settled, coherent natural order. Eagleton points out that Shakespeare, as a writer, is conscious that words are capricious and unfixed in their meaning and that a situation in which words no longer connect simply with what they mean, or what they refer to, can be compared to a breakdown in that natural order. He shows how Shakespeare associates this order with images of the body and thus he picks out body and language as his major themes.

He sees Shakespeare's last plays, especially *The Tempest*, as offering an illusory resolution of the conflict between body and language at the same time as resolving a contradiction between aristocratic and bourgeois values. He points out that this illusion was quickly dispelled by historical reality.

However, to say, as Eagleton does, that the 'bad news' we have to break to Shakespeare is that 'feudalism and capitalism did not, of course, prove amenable to judicious synthesis' seems to me only partly true. Surely it is the strength of this illusion, rooted as it is in the unfinished character of the English bourgeois revolution, which make Shakespeare's work so powerful and successful.

In his introduction Eagleton makes it clear that 'the present project' seems foolhardy, but there is relish in his task, and when you read this book you feel Eagleton's pleasure in reading Sheakespeare's works. He deals with the plays in chapters which cut across the well-used categories and an excitement is created by unexpectedness of the directions which he takes.

The book, however, left me wondering whom it was written for. This is not a general introductory review of Shakespeare's work as the simple title would suggest. The imprint for the series of which it is a part is 'Rereading Literature'. The reader needs to know the works of Shakespeare and be familiar with what appears to be a technical language. It is a struggle to understand what Eagleton is saying because of this. I suspect that the language is a camouflage to disguise old ideas and that the book is only for those who are in the know.

Jon Chadwick

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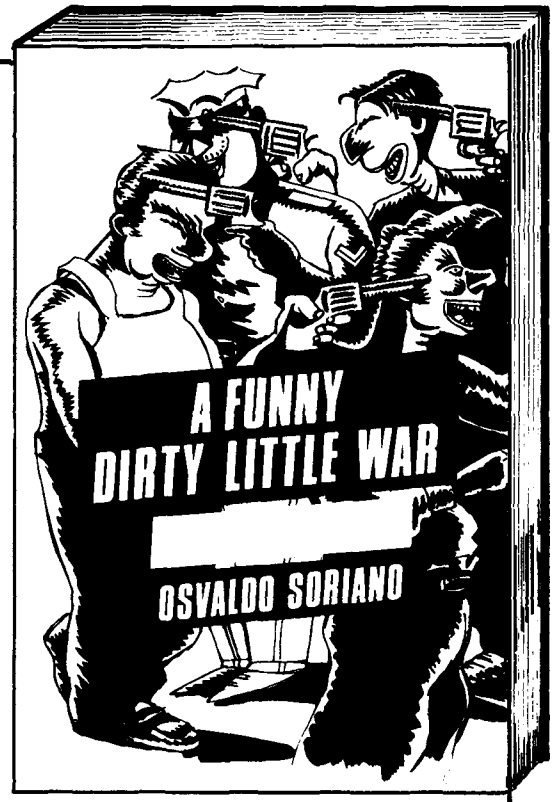

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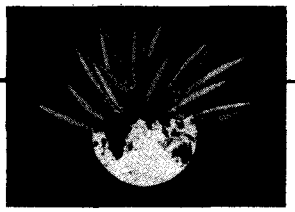

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Up Date

NEWS

Marxism Today Discussion Groups: 1) Formed in Kensington and Chelsea by communists, feminists, Labour and non-aligned readers. Details: 01-229 7456. 2) Formed at University College, Cardiff. Open to non-students. Information: G. Andrews, 4 Tudor St, Cardiff.

The Great Balloon Race for UN Year of Peace. Organisations and individuals are invited to participate. Starts March 28 and finishes on Sept 30. Details Pensioners for Peace: 06845 68365.

Leeds Postcards have produced a new set of 16 cards called The Cake. They represent a sculpture by Hidden Strengths who are a group of 20 women artists. Available from Leeds Postcards (£2.50 a set), PO Box 84, Leeds LS1 4HU Tel. 0532 468649.

Women Alive, South Bank Polytechnic, Borough Rd, London SE1, July 5-6. Tickets £12, £6 (unwaged), Day tickets also. Details: Maria Anteric 01-607 9939.

MEETINGS

Arming the World A short illustrated talk and discussion. April 9 at 8pm at The Studio, Bourne Hall, Ewell. Organised by Epsom and Ewell CND and The Campaign Against Arms Trade. Wheelchair access.

London Feminist History Group Cross-dressing Through the Ages with Anna Clark and Julie Wheelwright, April 11; Psychoanalysis and Feminist History with Sally Alexander and Cora Kaplan, April 25. Both at 7.30pm at Wesley House, Great Queen Street, London WC1.

North East Labour History Society Non-militancy in Mining Areas with Roy Sturgess, Bryan Rees and Tony Nicholson. April 30, Darlington College of Technology 7-9pm.

CONFERENCES

Trade Union Education in the 80s and 90s A weekend discussion on future strategy for trade union education aimed at senior lay and full-time trade union officials. April 4-6 at Northern College. £10 non-residential, £25 residential. Details: Dr M Mowlam, Northern College, Stainborough, Barnsley, South Yorks S75 3ET Tel. 0226 285426.

Critical Legal Studies European Conference 1986 Theory and Practice: Feminist Perspectives on Law. April 3-5 at Institute of Education, University of London. Details: Anne Bottomley, Law Dept, NE London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex Tel. 01-590 7722.

The End of the Nuclear Road: Building the alternative path. Joint Socialist Environment Resources' Association and Network for Alternative Technology and Technology Assessment conference. April 12, 10.30-5.30 at Red Rose Labour Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7. Details from SERA Tel. 01-439 3749.

EVENTS

Enriching Your Performance New series of theatre workshops led by Effie Arestides. Weekly until May 30 at Gray's Inn Resource Centre, 1a Roseberry Avenue, London EC1. £2 per session or £1.50 concessions. Details: 01-836 7071.

Black Experience Arts Programme Oral History Project Audio-Visual Exhibition. March 24-April 7 at Brixton Recreation Centre Tel. 01-274 7700. Exhibition: From Resistance to Rebellion. April 17-May 16 at Cockpit Gallery Tel. 01-405 5334.

Song History Workshop for people interested in the role of popular culture. April 26, 10-5.30 at All Saints Building, Manchester Polytechnic, Oxford Road, Manchester. Details: Alan Fair 061 228 6171.

PUBLICATIONS

West Midlands Film and Video Handbook A guide to grant-aided work currently in progress in the West Midlands. The handbook lists the activities of groups using film and video. Published by Birmingham Film and Video Workshop, 60 Hol St, Birmingham B7 4BA.

cartoon: Nick Newman

Print: How You Can Do It Yourself Provides step-by-step guidance on all aspects of printing and covers even the most basic techniques. There are also sections on the design of artwork and how to set up your own printshop. Interchange Books, Interchange, 15 Wilkin St, London NW5 3NG Tel. 01-267 9421.

Housing Taxation: Owner Occupation and the Reform of Housing Finance Report published by the Catholic Housing Aid Society recommends a major examination of the whole system of housing finance, including mortgage tax relief. An extension of the recommendations contained in *Faith in the Cities*. From CHAS, 189a Old Brompton Rd, London SW5 Tel. 01-373 4961.

The Case for Coal looks at the prospects for the North East coalfield within the context of the present government's energy policy, in particular the orientation towards nuclear power. Produced by North East Trade Union Studies Information Unit Tel. 091 281 6087.

Privatisation of NHS Ancillary Services shows the effects of contracting-out ancillary services on workers in the health services and also develops a critique of the strategies that trade unions are using to fight privatisation. Available from WEA, 9 Upper Berkeley St, London W1H 8BY Tel. 01-405 5608.

All in a Day's Work A report on anti-lesbian discrimination in employment and unemployment in London. Published by Lesbian Employment Rights, Room 203, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ. £2.50 (plus 30p p&p).

The British Economy: A Report on the Thatcher Experiment, Wynn Godley and others provide a disturbing picture. Available from: Dept. of Applied Economics, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DE and from bookshops.

VIDEOS AND FILMS

Links in the Chain – Making the Grade follows the struggle of women sewing machinists at Fords Halewood and Dagenham plants for equal pay, culminating in the 1984 strike over the grievance which had been simmering for 17 years. Available from Open Eye Film, Video and Animation Workshop, 90 Whitechapel, Liverpool L1 6EN, Merseyside Tel. 051 709 9460.

Song of the Spear examines the role of culture in the struggle for national liberation in Southern Africa. Available from International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Canon Collins House, 64 Essex Rd, London N1 8LR Tel. 01-359 9181.

Hot News examines issues of energy waste, fuel poverty, hypothermia, pollution and unemployment in the energy industries. Available from the Northern Film and TV Archive, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead NE8 2AR.

Wapping Lies is a 10-minute video to put the case of the media unions in defence of their jobs, trade union rights and press freedom. Available from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG Tel. 01-437 2795.

CAMPAIGNS

Save Child Benefit a campaign supported by 68 national organisations, has produced a special briefing pack which argues for the restoration of the cut made in child benefit in 1985 and an improvement. Available from Save Child Benefit, c/o 1 Macklin St, London WC2B 5NH Tel. 01-242 3225/ 9149.

Entries for the May Update should be sent to the office by April 10. For information: tel Diane Dixon on 01-965 7482 (evenings) or 608 0265 (day).

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Colin Sweet gave evidence at the Windscale and Sizewell inquiries and is an energy economist.
Jim Richardson has lived in the Philippines and writes on Philippine affairs.
Melissa Benn is a freelance writer and author of *Death in the City*.
Göran Therborn is the author of *Why Some Peoples are More Unemployed Than Others* (forthcoming).
Beatrix Campbell is the author of *Wigan Pier Revisited* and a member of the Communist Party.
Martin Jacques is editor of *Marxism Today*.
John Atkinson is a research associate of the Trade Union Research Unit at Ruskin College, Oxford.
Denis Gregory is a research officer at the Trade Union Research Unit at Ruskin College, Oxford.
For **Soviet roundtable** participants see p 18.
Denis Healey is Shadow Foreign Secretary and a former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Defence Secretary.
Jonathan Steele is the chief foreign correspondent of *The Guardian*.
Sara Mills is a research student at Birmingham University.
Patrick Williams is a research student at Nottingham University.
Pete Carter is the CP's National Industrial Organiser.
Julien Temple is a film director.
Marek Kohn is a freelance writer.
Brian Hipkin writes on popular culture.
Rex Barker works at Goldsmiths College.
Sioned-Mair Richards is a member of the CP.
Mike Power is a printworker at the *Daily Mail* and a member of the CP.
Jon Chadwick is a theatre director and writer and a member of the CP.
Alan Rusbridger is a freelance writer on *The Guardian*.

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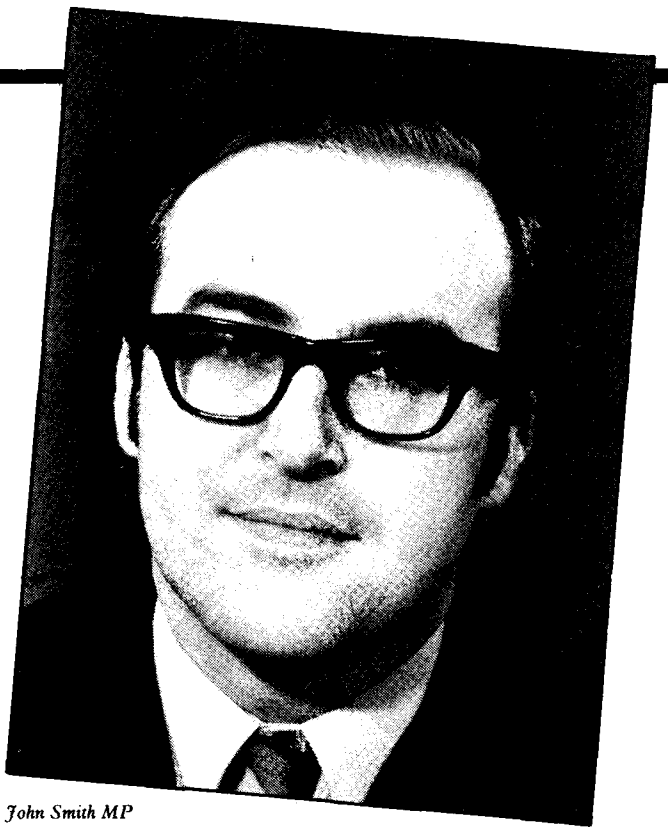

John Smith MP

'Mildly overweight, beaming through black-framed spectacles but able, I always feel, to stamp on the odd windpipe if required to.'

It is thus that Edward Pearce, caustic *Telegraph* sketch writer, sums up the Rt Hon John Smith in his latest book of parliamentary pen portraits, and it is not far wrong. Pearce clearly admires Smith – indeed, he admits that Smith has a devoted Tory following. He evidently likes him. But at the same time he is nigglingly aware of the edge of steely ruthlessness and driving ambition without being quite sure what it is that drives him.

What is not in doubt is that John Smith has become a formidable operator. Devotees had always known it, but his spectacular debating skills, speed of thought and withering way with a dry humour burst upon a much wider audience during the Westland affair. He rapidly reduced Leon Brittan to the mannerisms of a dazzled rabbit and time after time tripped the government as they ran backwards as fast as their little legs would carry them.

It would have been a good month's work by anyone's standards. But no sooner had the dust settled than Smith was back again, helping to pile on the humiliation over the government's back-down over Austin-Rover. And he has been back again dishing out punishment over the inept handling of the Land-Rover sale. Trade and Industry has been a cursed chalice for recent Tory incumbents. It has, in its shadow form, done very nicely for Mr Smith.

But then Mr Smith has, in his own quiet way, been doing very nicely for some time now. He was the youngest member of Callaghan's cabinet in 1978 – 10 weeks younger than Dr Owen. He owed his position there to work he had done on North Sea oil and then on devolution under Michael Foot. The work was for the most part unspectacular. But no-one else much wanted to do it, and it was perfectly suited to Smith's legalistic skills at mastering mind-numbing amounts of small detail.

It is that skill – and his nimble parliamentary performances – that have won him the respect of the Left, though he himself is broadly of the Right. 'He is,' says a colleague, 'a bloody good performer and the safest pair of hands we've got.' Tam Dalyell describes him as 'glitteringly bright in a forensic way'. A senior Tory backbencher says of him: 'He is very, very able indeed. There's no doubt we fear him. Whether or not he makes it to the top in his own party is a different matter.'

Smith is now in his late 40s. He was born and brought up in a small west coast of Scotland village, the son of the local schoolmaster. His father was a radical and a socialist, not at all well-off but a respected figure in local society. He was also ambitious for his son. At the age of 14, young John Smith was packed off to live in lodgings in the local town; the village had no secondary school, let alone a grammar school.

He read law at Glasgow University and stood twice as a student as Labour candidate in Fife East. He was, according to his contemporaries, 'quite a wild young man'. The book he ran on the 1966 general election was so successful it paid his way through the end of his legal training, qualifying as an advocate the following year. He made it to the Commons in the safe seat of North Lanarkshire in 1970.

Since being in opposition, he has steadily climbed the shadow cabinet ranking and, though he inevitably has his eye on the chancellorship, enjoys trade and industry and the opportunity of working as a co-ordinated team with Hattersley and Prescott.

A fair amount of his time has recently been taken up with discreet background spadework with both industrialists and trade unionists. He believes there is no difficulty in finding common ground to march over, but is equally clear that, should Labour win, the time available in which to regenerate British industry will be desperately short. He is thus keen to sort out as many potential areas of disagreement as he can before he strictly needs to.

In his earlier career there was a whiff of opportunism which some of his colleagues objected to. Tam Dalyell, for instance, recalls one occasion some years ago when Smith publicly attacked him over Ireland. He felt then that Smith had his eye on the main chance, but happily concedes that Smith is now not only a very nice man, but also his own man.

Some of his colleagues will tell you he lacks any deep convictions, socialist or otherwise. They suspect that he would soon be off to a lucrative practice at the Scottish bar if faced with the prospect of too many terms on the shadow benches. But he himself speaks convincingly enough of his passionate urge to harness socialism to pragmatic ends. Ideology doesn't much excite him. Restructuring a banking and finance system that would fuel his plans for a mixed but broadly based industrial regeneration does.

Above all he has the ideal temperament to succeed. It is perfectly true; he can be ruthless. 'He operates,' says an admiring colleague, 'on that excellent maxim never kick a man until he's down.' But he is also completely unflappable and utterly easy going. 'I've never seen him worry about anything for more than a day,' says a lifelong friend. He just wakes up the next morning and says: 'What the hell. Let's get on with it.'

He lives in Edinburgh with his wife, Elizabeth, who works for the GB/USSR Society, and three children. There are plenty who will tell you his attachment to the cause of Scottish devolution was never – isn't still – more than skin deep. But he has always refused to move his family to London, and speaks with considerable force about Scotland and of the need for regional government. It may, of course, simply be the talk of a glib barrister or of a cynic. But one suspects that behind the mildly-overweight, beaming, slightly threatening figure there does lurk a passion, not simply for the means of politics, but for its ends.

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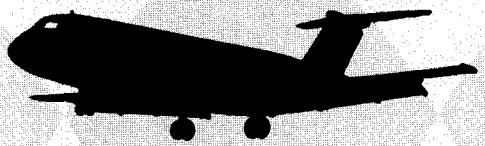

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1986 programme one month vacation courses. In July at Moscow (Kalinin), Leningrad, Minsk, Kharkov and Volgograd; in August at Moscow and Leningrad and in September at Krasnodar. Winter courses include Moscow in November, Leningrad over Christmas and New Year and new course planned for Yalta for October and at Leningrad University for January and February 1987.

Kiev Summer Course. 13th April-27th June. Extra places are now available on the 3 months programme at Kiev.

SPECIAL OFFERS ●

ITALY

1986 May Day in Bologna. Seven days based in Ravenna. Also visiting Ferrara, San Marino, Venice and Florence. Dp. 30th April.

SOVIET UNION

May Day and Victory Day Tours. 26th April–3rd May, Moscow/Vladimir/Suzdal; 27th April–4th May, Leningrad/Talin/Moscow; 8th –13th May, Moscow/Vladimir/Suzdal. Prices from £238. Other departures for summer and October half-term, November celebrations and New Year.

Medical Exchange Programme. Two week visit for doctors and health workers in June and for medical students commencing late August. Details on request.

PARIS.

Fete de l'Humanite. 12th–15th September by coach to Paris for the great left-wing festival. Returning via Reims with a wine tasting in Champagne. £63. Bookings now open.

MARATHONS ABROAD. Following our 100-strong contingent to the Moscow marathon in August 1985, a full programme of marathon and other tours for runners is in preparation, including the first mass marathon in Africa (Tunis, 13th April, 1986) and again in Moscow (9th August, 1986). 6th–14th August. Moscow/Vladimir/Suzdal. £365.

PENSIONERS FOR PEACE INTERNATIONAL

A new 1986 programme of PPI peace tours, renewing this year's visits to Romania and the USSR and extended to Italy, Spain, Hungary and other countries, is now available.

Specialist tour operator to the labour and student movements

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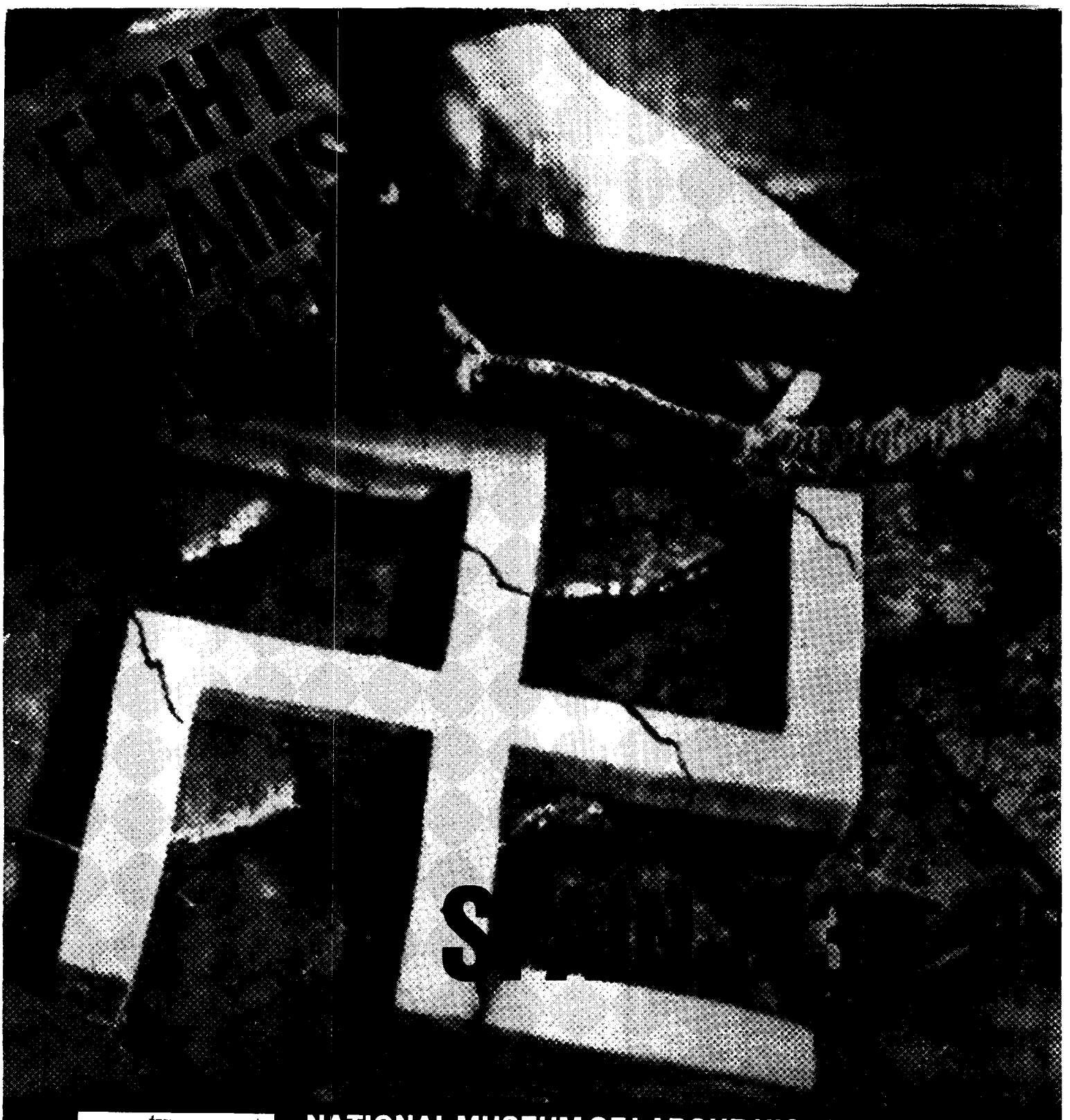

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF LABOUR HISTORY

Lime House Town Hall Commercial Road E14 (515 3229)
BR Stepney East Buses 5, 15, 40, 106
Tues-Sat 9.30-17.00 Sun 14.30-17.30

'The Response of the British Labour Movement to the Spanish Civil War'

This exhibition marks the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The display of posters and artefacts provide visual documentation of support given to the anti-fascist struggle by the labour movement in this country. A number of stunning posters appealing for food and medical aid are reproduced for sale. Also available for viewing is the museum's permanent collection of banners, paintings and other Trade Union and Labour objects.

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